



**BUILDING PEACE IN POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES: AN  
EXPLORATION OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN LIBERIA'S  
PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE**

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2018

## DECLARATION

I, **Lukong Stella Shulika** declare that:

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## DEDICATION

*To my beloved parents Mr. Lukong Fon Julius Fabian and Mrs. Bongkiyung  
Helena Shiykpu, as well as to the evergreen memory of my lovely late sister  
Nyuykighan Lukong Honorine.*

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## ABSTRACT

Post-conflict situations raise questions about the level to which the notion and practice of peacebuilding can contribute to sustainable peace, reconstruction, and development through transformative gender-responsive and inclusive processes. Embedded in these inquiries are the different standpoints and accentuation that the role and contributions of women in peacebuilding are an important contextual component for (post-)conflict agendas and are very much interlinked to their human and civil rights to participation and representation in public and official decision-making processes. This notwithstanding, the question regarding women's participation, representation, and the consideration of their interests in the array of post-conflict approaches and processes still remains subject to a complexity of institutional, structural, socio-economic injustices and challenges, even at the grassroots levels.

This study recognizes the manner and extent to which the importance of demystifying misconceptions about women and integrating their lived experiences into peacebuilding is imperative for the effectiveness and sustainability of post-conflict drives and its environment. Therefore, to understand the processes of peacebuilding in post-conflict transitions and address the question regarding the role of women therein, this study capitalizes on the Liberian experience as a macrocosm that embodies these themes. It provides a nuanced perspective and context of the role of women and women organizations in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture using a qualitative research methodology that comprises the review of relevant secondary info and primary data generated from focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with selected women organizations, institutions, and individuals in Liberia. The study identifies the absence of comprehensive scholarship that specifically examines women's role in relation to each defined pillar of what constitutes post-conflict transition processes. Likewise, it uncovers dearth in literature inherent in the areas of policy implementation and domestication as well as the tendency to homogenize women and women's organizational roles and significance.

In response to these gaps, the study adopts post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development theoretical framework, and Maxine Molyneux's organizational theory. These theories serve as the lens through which the study expounds on the underlying importance of

women's peacebuilding agencies as being practically and strategically diverse as their experiences of conflict and the approaches that inform the different post-conflict processes. Hence, the study generates critical insights on women's opportunities and challenges of engagement as well as the importance of using transformative stances to peacebuilding programmes; cognizant of the proactive role women are playing and their underplayed contributions in Liberia. It arrives at the several findings, including that Liberian women through their distinctive and shared experiences of conflict provide a gendered specific and transformative perspective to peace and security agendas both at the structural and practical levels. It also establishes that diverse women initiatives remain(ed) the core interventionist platform for women's efforts in peace and decision-making processes during and in (post-) conflict Liberia and that there are numerous barriers to women's peacebuilding efforts.

The study concludes with several recommendations and the contention that women's initiatives and agency for peace if genuinely supported would represent and serve as a strategy to progressively advance their different gender interests, participation, and representation in decision-making. It would equally increase the effective implementation as well as eventual sustainability of peacebuilding and development processes in Liberia.

**Key Words:** Post-conflict Societies; Women and Women's Organizations; Liberia; Policy Instruments; Post-conflict Peacebuilding, Reconstruction, and Development Framework; and Maxine Molyneux's Organizational Theory.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .....	i
DEDICATION .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	vii
APPENDICES .....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES .....	xii
ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS .....	xiii
CHAPTER ONE .....	1
OVERVIEW OF THE WOMEN AND PEACEBUILDING DISCOURSE .....	1
1.1. Introduction .....	1
1.2. Background of the research .....	3
1.2.1. Historic overview of the Liberian case study .....	7
1.2.2. Synopsis of Liberian conflict history-1989 to 2003 .....	9
1.2.3. A brief on women’s initiatives towards ending the civil wars .....	14
1.3. Parameters of the women-peacebuilding discourse .....	14
1.4. Research framework .....	18
1.5. Research questions .....	19
1.6. Research objectives .....	20
1.7. Purpose and significance of the research .....	21
1.8. Structure of the research .....	23
1.9. Conclusion .....	26
CHAPTER TWO .....	28
LITERATURE REVIEW: WOMEN IN PEACEBUILDING AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY PERSPECTIVES .....	28
2.1. Introduction .....	28
2.2. Historical perspectives of women’s roles in the African contexts .....	29
2.2.1. Social context .....	30
2.2.2. Economic context .....	31
2.2.3. Political context .....	32
2.2.4. Peacebuilding context .....	34



2.3. Deconstructing the women and peacebuilding nexus in the context of current debates .....	37
2.3.1. Women as conflict instigators and combatants .....	39
2.3.2. Women as caregivers and peacebuilders during conflict and in post- conflict .....	42
2.4. International policy context on women and peacebuilding .....	46
2.4.1. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) .....	48
2.4.2. The UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS).....	48
2.4.3. Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa.....	50
2.5. Women’s organizations in peacebuilding .....	58
2.6. Conclusion.....	62
<b>CHAPTER THREE.....</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: (POST-) CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING AND WOMEN’S ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY .....</b>	<b>64</b>
3.1. Introduction.....	64
3.2. The framework of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development.....	66
3.2.1. Security (security sector reform/transformation).....	70
3.2.2. Justice and reconciliation .....	73
3.2.3. Socio-economic well-being.....	74
3.2.4. Governance and participation.....	77
3.3. Maxine Molyneux’s organizational theory .....	80
3.3.1. Women’s practical gender interest .....	82
3.3.2. Women’s strategic gender interest.....	83
3.4. Rights-based approach to peacebuilding .....	88
3.5. Conclusion .....	91
<b>CHAPTER FOUR .....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS.....</b>	<b>93</b>
4.1. Introduction.....	93
4.2. Research paradigm .....	94
4.3. Methodological approach .....	94
4.4. Sources of data collection .....	96
4.5. Sampling method and sample population/size .....	99
4.6. Method of data analysis.....	106
4.7. Ethical considerations .....	107
4.8. Limitations and challenges of the study.....	108
4.9. Conclusion.....	111

CHAPTER FIVE.....	113
<b>LIBERIAN WOMEN IN PURSUIT OF PEACE: EXPERIENCES AND APPROACHES OF WOMEN ORGANIZATIONS IN THE (POST-) CONFLICT CONTEXT .....</b>	<b>113</b>
5.1. Introduction.....	113
5.2. Women organizing for peace: the narratives and strategies .....	115
5.2.1. Women’s individual agency in conflict times.....	117
5.2.2. Women’s organizations, peace agencies and strategies in conflict times .....	123
5.2.2.1. Advocacy campaigns.....	125
5.2.2.2. Peaceful demonstrations .....	129
5.2.2.3. Attending conferences/dialogues and peace talks .....	134
5.2.3. Women’s organizational roles and approaches in the post-conflict.....	138
5.2.3.1. Women and security sector reform in post-conflict Liberia.....	140
5.2.3.2. Women, governance and participation in post-conflict Liberia .....	145
5.2.3.3. Women, justice and reconciliation in post-conflict Liberia .....	150
5.2.3.4. Women and socio-economic wellbeing in post-conflict Liberia .....	156
5.3. Conclusion.....	162
 CHAPTER SIX .....	 165
<b>COMPLEMENTARITY OF THE GOVERNMENT - LOCAL - INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND WOMEN’S ROLES IN LIBERIA’S PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE.....</b>	<b>165</b>
6.1. Introduction.....	165
6.2. Early recognition of Liberian women in public leadership .....	167
6.3. Liberian government in post-conflict development: enhancing women’s peacebuilding and decision-making role .....	172
6.3.1. Supporting women’s political participation and governance .....	173
6.3.2. Strengthening women’s participation in SSR and TRC processes .....	179
6.3.3. Addressing women’s interests through the adoption of national policies and strategies .....	183
6.3.4. The woman president factor and the advancement of women’s position.....	191
6.4. Local and international organization’s support for women’s agency and peacebuilding role in Liberia.....	196
6.4.1. Local support for women’s role: case of the PUL .....	197
6.4.2. International support for women’s efforts: case of the UNMIL-OGA.....	200
6.5. Conclusion.....	203

CHAPTER SEVEN.....	206
CHALLENGES CONFRONTING WOMEN ORGANIZATIONS' EFFORTS IN LIBERIA'S PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE .....	206
7.1. Introduction.....	206
7.2. Barriers to women's peacebuilding roles in Liberia .....	207
7.2.1. Under-representation of women in political leadership and decision-making processes .....	208
7.2.2. Sexual and gender-based violence .....	212
7.2.3. Patriarchy and ingrained cultural practices.....	215
7.2.4. Lack of financial resources for projects and organizational sustainability .....	223
7.2.5. Disunity and class divide among women organizations .....	224
7.2.6. The capacity building challenge .....	226
7.3. Conclusion.....	230
CHAPTER EIGHT .....	231
CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS.....	231
8.1. Introduction.....	231
8.2. Summary of the research findings .....	233
8.3. Recommendations to women's peacebuilding challenges.....	240
8.4. Contribution of the study .....	244
8.5. Suggestions for further research .....	247
REFERENCES .....	250

## APPENDICES

<b>Appendix I:</b> Liberian Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) – Activism for Peace .....	275
<b>Appendix II:</b> Profiles of Organizations that Participated in this Study .....	276
<b>Appendix III:</b> Women Rising for Peace - A Narrative.....	280
<b>Appendix V:</b> Publication Outcomes of the Study .....	285
<b>Appendix VI:</b> Gatekeepers Letter for Field Research in Liberia.....	288
<b>Appendix VII:</b> Cover Letter and Document of Informed Consent .....	289
<b>Appendix VIII:</b> Ethical Clearance Letters - UKZN .....	292
<b>Appendix IX:</b> Interviews and Focus Group Discussion Questions.....	294
<b>Appendix X:</b> Pictures from Field Research in Liberia .....	299

## LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

<b>Figure 1.1:</b> Map of Liberia.....	8
<b>Table 1.2:</b> A Profile of Liberian Civil Wars: 1989 - 1996 and 1999 - 2003.....	9
<b>Table 2.1:</b> Gender Equality and Provisions in Constitutions of Africa by Countries .....	51
<b>Table 2.2:</b> Regional Representation of Women in Parliament 2000/2015 .....	52
<b>Table 2.3:</b> Proportion of Seats held by Women in Single or Lower Houses in National Parliaments (Revised and delimited to African Countries).....	53
<b>Table 3.1:</b> Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Interests and Indicators of positive changes in women’s conditions and positions.....	84
<b>Table 6.1:</b> Liberian Women in Leadership – 1948 to 2003 .....	167
<b>Table 6.2:</b> Liberian Women in Leadership – 2003 to Present .....	174
<b>Table: 6.3:</b> Liberia’s National Policies and Development Strategies .....	184

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFL	:	Armed Forces of Liberia
AU	:	African Union
BPfA	:	Beijing Platform for Action
CPA	:	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSOs	:	Civil Society Organizations
DDR	:	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration
DEN-L	:	Development Education Network -Liberia
ECOMOG	:	Economic Community Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	:	Economic Community of West African States
FGD	:	Focus Group Discussion
GCW	:	Ganta Concern Women Development Association
IDPs	:	Internally Displaced Persons
INPFL	:	Independent National Patriotic Front
LIFLEA	:	Liberian Female Law Enforcement Association
LURD	:	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
LWI	:	Liberian Women Initiative
MARWOPNET	:	Mano River Women's Peace Network
MODEL	:	Movement for Democracy in Liberia
MoGCSP	:	Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection
NAWOCOL	:	National Women's Commission of Liberia
NGOs	:	Non-Governmental Organizations

NPFL	:	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OGA	:	Office of Gender Advisor
PCRD	:	Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development
PUL	:	Press Union of Liberia
RBA	:	Right-Based Approach
RUF	:	Revolutionary United Front
SSR/T	:	Security Sector Reform/Transformation
TRC	:	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UDHR	:	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
ULIMO	:	United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy
UN	:	United Nations
UNDW	:	United Nations International Decade for Women
UNMIL	:	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNOMIL	:	UN Observer Mission in Liberia
UNSCR	:	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WANEP	:	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WIPNET	:	Women in Peacebuilding Network
WONGOSOL	:	Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia
WPS	:	Women, Peace and Security

## CHAPTER ONE

### OVERVIEW OF THE WOMEN AND PEACEBUILDING DISCOURSE

#### 1.1. Introduction

Understood as the centre of post-conflict processes, the notion and practice of peacebuilding is not just about addressing root causes of the conflict and building peace, but also ensuring sustainable reconstruction and development through gender-sensitive, responsive, equal, and inclusive processes. The recognition of this fact highlights past and ongoing demands for women's inclusion and the need for them to play key roles in these processes. While this call has gained quite some momentum in the arena of policy discourses, in practice, women continue to be marginalized and underrepresented in most spheres of public decision-making. It is in light of this that this study develops in consciousness as an academic research that aims to acquire and contribute to knowledge and insight on the interconnectedness between women and (post-) conflict peacebuilding architectures in Africa. Being a comprehensive and analytical examination of women's role in peacebuilding, the study focuses on the contributions and engagements of women and women's organizations in Liberia in order to better ground the discourse. In an assortment of ways, the Liberian experience is an exemplar that embodies the situation of women in post-conflict transitions in Africa. As exemplified in the section that follows below, Liberian women were quite influential in transforming the conflict landscape towards peace and the current leadership environment the country celebrates today. While this establishes acknowledgement of their profound roles as peacebuilders, it also unfurls platforms for critical assessments of their constantly evolving role in Liberia's (post-) conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development agendas.

In appraising the women and peacebuilding link, the study advances from a generic perspective, remarking that as long as the history of post-colonial Africa catalogues, the African continent was for a long time characterized as a hub of most of the world's conflicts<sup>1</sup>. Often, the standard practice in such conflict climates is the disciplining of the conflict society

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<sup>1</sup> It is however important to note that this claim of Africa as a den of crime and warfare has been castigated by modernist who think that this discourse is more of colonial undertones.



into peace through negotiations and engagements in peace processes. In this given, states and societies are then challenged with the operose and complex tasks of (re)building and developing the fragile and dysfunctional political and socio-economic structures, as well as the society's resources and human capacities destroyed during conflict (African Union 2006). To Hamre and Sullivan (2002: 89), embarking in this process of peacebuilding especially in the post-conflict involves four notable reconstruction agencies, which are, security; justice and reconciliation; socio-economic well-being; and governance and participation. Engaging in these processes mandate for measures that are indispensable to obviating a degeneration into conflict by supporting the operative transition of conflict states to attain sustainable peace and security, as well as socio-economic and political development (UN Peacebuilding Support Office 2010). While this directive of what entails peacebuilding in the post-conflict seems feasible, the question arises - what are or would be the most practicable strategies for ensuring the effective implementation and sustainability of the processes? The prevalent response across conflict and post-conflict societies, as well as by international, regional and local organizations/groups and governments, has been recommendations for the adoption of policies that build on national capacity, ownership and inclusivity of the local stakeholders, that is, the civil society (UN Peacebuilding Support Office 2010).

Advancing from the above thought, it is recorded that women are part and parcel of the civil society, often at times constituting the majority population in most societies. Pankhurst and Anderlini (1998), Alaga (2010), and (McKay 2004) however contend that women who constitute a major part of civil society, be it pre- or post-conflict, are often excluded from these processes. Furthermore, they assert that the consequence of women's unequal representation and relegation from decision-making processes is not only a short-term challenge that occurs during conflicts times leading to peace negotiations, but also long-term, as in the event of initiating and implementing post-conflict development agendas (Pankhurst and Anderlini 1998; McKay 2004). While, Tuyizere (2007) ascertains that such marginalization owes to certain inadequacies, examples being unequal power relations, structural and societal sexist or stereotypical attitude towards women's leadership ability. These barriers, as she further contends, encroach on their universal human rights to participate in decision-making processes, meant to also impact their lives (Tuyizere 2007). Nevertheless, different

experiences from across the globe also suggest that the proactive participation, equal representation, and integration of women's perspectives in all aspects of decision-making is imperative for the sustainability of peace and development<sup>2</sup> of any government or society (Tuyizere 2007; USAID 2007). In the same trend of thoughts, former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, had previously underscored this logicity when he enunciated that:

“the contributions of women and girls to all stages of conflict resolution and management, peace-making, peacebuilding, peacekeeping and reconstruction processes can no longer be minimized or ignored because sustainable peace will not be achieved without the full and equal participation of women and men” (United Nations 2002).

To situate the women-peacebuilding discourse in the context of this dissertation, this introductory chapter provides a generic context/background to the study and narrows it down to the Liberian case study, where it profiles the country's conflict history and the rise of women's movements towards the task of reinstating peace. This profiling is necessary in this chapter in order to unearth understanding of both specific and generic underpinnings of the study's research problem as it relates to the subject of women and peacebuilding. The chapter further defines the parameters of the women-peacebuilding discourse and illuminates the research hypothesis, objectives, questions, and significance of the study.

## **1.2. Background of the research**

Conflict-linked accounts across the globe are generally associated with the reality of the tensions and dissonances common with human relationships and the day-to-day functionality of societies. The typical trend as recorded by history is that where these relationships are inundated by political and socio-economic power dynamics that favour a cluster of privileged few or ethnicity against the other, violent/armed conflicts and civil wars have ensued as a result. In the African continent, countries like the Sudan and South Sudan, Liberia, Angola,

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<sup>2</sup> It is important to note here that peace is not synonymous to development, but both are integral for long-term post-conflict recovery efforts, where the presence and attainment of peace remains very strategic to sustainable human and societal development efforts. As such, the concept of development in this study constitutes an important element of post-conflict reconstruction efforts, which Johan Galtung (1975) also describes as rooted in the four major pillars of reconstruction as outlined in the second paragraph, fourth sentence on page 1 above. This given, peace and security are therefore prerequisites for political, economic and social development especially in the post-conflict.

the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Mali, Uganda, Libya, and Central African Republic, are just a few examples of countries that have and remain to shoulder the experiences of such conflicts. Usually, humanity and societies' disastrous encounters with violent conflicts<sup>3</sup> have seen both women and men disproportionately affected as they face different forms of indescribable suffering (United Nations 2002; Massaquoi 2007). Scholars and studies<sup>4</sup> that assert this view commonly accentuate that the variance of conflicts' effects on women and men owes to the gender roles and identities attributed to their maleness or femaleness in their specific social orders. While women are often said to bear the brunt of this conflict effects, it does not, however, mean that women do not also instigate or take up arms during conflicts.

In terms of conflicts' effects, Rehn and Sirleaf (2001) contend that women are particularly vulnerable to the despicable vices of war, most often as victims of the culture of sexual abuse, rape and violence that is commonplace among rebel groups. Indicators by the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery at United Nations Development Program in 2008 revealed that "approximately 40 women were raped daily in South Kivu, DRC; between 20,000 and 50,000 women were raped during the war in Bosnia in the early 1990s; in Sierra Leone, between 50,000 and 64,000 internally displaced women suffered sexual assault at the hands of combatants; the Rwandan genocide memorial notes that 500,000 women were raped during 100 days of conflict." Furthermore, Rehn and Sirleaf (2001) assert that rape is used as a weapon and torture mechanism to conflict. Likewise, there is the reprobate act of abuse and sexual exploitation of women, where women are coerced to sexually engage with men either as a means of staying alive or ensuring the survival of their families (Women's Rights International and Voices in Empowering Women in Liberia 2008). Moreover, reports and studies allude that women, girls and children constitute an average 80% of displaced people and refugee population in camps during and after the wars have ended (Rehn and Sirleaf 2001; Refugee Council 2009). While the reality of such conflict burdens are widespread in

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<sup>3</sup> Generally, the consequences of such 'power dynamics-induced conflicts' are devastating in terms of death tolls, displacement of people, human rights violations and abuse of especially of women and children, destruction of property and the general peace and security of the society.

<sup>4</sup> See studies by Rehn and Sirleaf (2001); Puechguirbal (2004); Massaquoi (2007); Alaga (2010); McCarthy (2011); AusAID (2006), United Nations (2002); UNSCR 1325 (2000); Chang, Alam, Warren, Bhatia, and Turkington (2015); UN Women (2015); etc.

conflict societies, literature also substantiates that women are much more than passive casualties of conflict (USAID 2007).

According to Kaufman and Williams (2013), one noticeable characteristic of armed conflicts and civil wars on women is its ability to change their gender<sup>5</sup> roles and relations in society by creating an arena for a shift from their traditionally conceived responsibilities to that which is more public and unconventional. In other words, the different kinds of encumbrances that conflict imposes on women propel them to embrace diverse roles as breadwinners of their families and communities, combatants, and most importantly harbingers and architects of peace initiatives that have successfully influenced the resolution of conflicts (USAID 2007; Kaufman and Williams 2013). Such cases of women's changing roles by way of popular peace advocacy, politicking, and peace movements are consistent with South Africa, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Liberia paradigms, just to mention a few. Again, never minding the resolve of women to set the strides for peace negotiations and an end to conflicts, they remain either marginalized<sup>6</sup> or excluded from official decision-making and peacebuilding processes both during in the aftermath of conflicts (AusAID 2006; USAID 2007).

Addressing the issues of women's exclusion, the subject of women's recognition<sup>7</sup>, inclusion and participation as important stakeholders in peace agendas, have in the recent past, received substantial attention from policy makers and researchers across the globe. This is apparent in several of the African Union's operative frameworks, including the Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace in Africa of 1999; the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa of 2003; the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) of 2004; the Post-Conflict Reconstruction and

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<sup>5</sup> Gender denotes the socially constructed definition of women and men, as determined by the role society attributes to them both publicly and privately. While the term gender will be severally mentioned in this research, women remain the main focus because of their historic experiences, roles and challenges in pursuit of peace as this study critically assesses using Liberia as case in point.

<sup>6</sup> While the element of women's marginalization is recurrent in this study, note is taken that such marginalization be it social- political- economic-wise, is experienced differently by women either as individuals or groups (Isike 2009).

<sup>7</sup> Recognition as used in the context of this study is taken to mean the ability to acknowledge the human rights and freedoms, and legitimacy of all human beings as being equal. Emphasis here is women's recognition, since they are the most marginalized in decision-making processes and constitute the focus of this study.

Development Policy of 2006 (African Union 2009); the Agenda 2063 on the ‘African We Want’ of 2013; and Agenda 2020 on ‘Silencing the Guns, Owning the Future: Realizing a Conflict-free Africa’ of 2014 (African Union 2014). Correspondingly, this development is most significantly evident in the adoption of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on Women, Peace and Security in October 2000. It is important to note that the UNSCR 1325 on WPS is a product of ten years of deliberation subsequent to the Fourth World Conference on Women, which resulted in the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action<sup>8</sup> in September 1995 (Olsson and Gizelis 2013). Labelled a pioneering and strategic legal framework for the promotion of women’s rights and role in peace processes, the UNSCR 1325 dictates for their “full involvement and equal participation in all phases and efforts of conflict prevention, management, resolution, peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction, aimed to maintain and promote sustainable peace and security” (UNSCR 1325 of 2000). Premeditated to apply to the context of post-conflict, the UNSCR 1325 also touches cord on the importance of gender mainstreaming and security considerations as necessary for increasing women’s representation and participation, and facilitating constructive transformation and development in post-conflict societies (McLeod 2011).

From the above background, it is deciphered that assessing women’s peacebuilding roles entails a flipped interrogation of both the enabling and constraining factors of their engagements in (post-) conflict peacebuilding processes. Considering this perspective, the study assumes the research task of appraising the role of women in peacebuilding and the challenges that confront them as a result of their engagements. This is done with a particular focus to deepen understanding on the relevance of the women-peacebuilding nexus within the context of Liberian experience as a working example. The purposeful delimitation of the scope to Liberia owes to the background of the country’s conflict history as presented in the section below. Hence, the case study is advanced on the basis of the substantive role Liberian

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<sup>8</sup> The Beijing Declaration of 1995 centres on promoting equality, development and peace objectives for women worldwide. Among other provisions, it aims to empower women and advance their equal participation in the decision-making process and access to power as indispensable for the attainment of equality, development and peace (Beijing Declaration 1995).

women played in the resolution of the country's fourteen years of prolonged civil conflicts, under the banner of women's organizations. The choice of Liberia is also informed by the prominence of women's organizational determination and ability to vie for constructive transformation in the event of post-conflict, which saw the election of a female president and the eventual revision of a number of State laws, including those on rape and inheritance, among others. While, this focus also builds on the knowledge that irrespective of women's proactive contributions to peace pre-to-after the years-long (2003 to present) setup of Liberia's reconstruction agenda, they are still confronted by the complexities of unequal representation in decision-making structures.

### **1.2.1. Historic overview of the Liberian case study**

The Republic of Liberia is located in West Africa and borders the Atlantic Ocean, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Ivory Coast (see Liberian Map, Table 1.1 below). Monrovia is its capital city and the administrative hub. According to the 2013 World Bank report, Liberia encompasses a diverse population of 4.2 million people, spread out across its 15 counties (see map below), which are governed by administrators appointed by the President. English is Liberia's official language, though there are 20 more languages spoken by the different ethnic groups. Liberia is endowed with productive soil, thus making agriculture its leading source of income. It is also rich in natural resources, such as diamond, timber, gold, iron ore, cocoa, rubber, and hydropower. Nevertheless, the Human Development Index indicates that a majority of Liberian population, approximately 85% subsists on as little as 1.25 Dollars or less per day, which is way below the poverty line (United Nations Development Programme 2012). Liveability in this situation of poverty is particularly hard-felt and encumbering on women, often exposing them to the problem and challenge of food insecurity and famishment. This principally is because women continue to be marginalized and remain susceptible to the inequitable and exploitative culture of low remunerations, especially in the agricultural and informal labour sectors, where they actually make up the majority work force (Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services 2008). Besides this, the high level of illiteracy among women continues to be a matter of great concern, as is maternal mortality rate and violence against women (Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services 2008). Having survived two destructive civil wars, Liberia today holds the historic record of



the first African country to consecutively, in 2005 and 2011 respectively, elected into power the first female president.

**Figure 1.1: Map of Liberia**



Source: <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/liberia.pdf>

Unlike many other African countries, Liberia presents a unique history of a country that was never colonized. Known as Africa’s first republic, Liberia was founded in 1822 by Afro-American slave settlers (Moran 2012: 55). While they faced resistance from the native African inhabitants of Liberia, the slave immigrants with assistance from American Colonization

Society, formed an Americo-Liberian government in 1847, thereby declaring the country independent (Moran 2012: 55). Chronicles of Liberia’s history after independence speak of the marginalization and under-representation of Liberian indigenous population in all socio-political and economic decision-making processes of the state by the Afro-American settlers (TRC Liberia - Final Report 2009). As further stated by this report, it was predominantly this element of exclusion that led to Liberia’s disintegration and the first military coup against William R. Tolbert by Liberian indigene Samuel Doe in 1980, who later became president in 1985. In November 1985, a second but failed coup d’état against Doe’s government by Colonel Thomas Quiwonkpa not only led to his own demise but that of his armed forces together with the Gios and Manos, perpetrated by President Doe’s regime (Tripp 2015: 81). Ultimately, the third coup by Charles Taylor against Doe’s government in 1989 marked the start of Liberia’s civil wars that lasted till 2003.

**1.2.2. Synopsis of Liberian conflict history–1989 to 2003**

The Liberian Civil Wars have been attributed to many different causes. Some of these as outlined by Popovic (2009) and Alaga (2011), include the marginalization and exploitation of the indigenous Liberians by the expatriates, which in particular caused tensions between them and the Mandingo ethnic group; Land issues; the discriminatory, dictatorial and abusive regime of Sergeant Samuel Doe, which created ethnic divisions and antipathy especially between his Krahn ethnic group and the Gio group; bad governance; and the menacing economic crises. The table below provides a chronological account of the two Liberian civil wars.

**Table 1.1: A Profile of Liberian Civil Wars: 1989 - 1996 and 1999 - 2003**

Liberia’s First Civil War: 1989 to 1996	
<b>1989 to 1990</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Charles Taylor, an Americo-Liberian warlord and leader of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) launches a military coup against the government of Samuel Doe in December and is massively supported by Gio and Mano ethnic groups, among others.</li> <li>- Taylor further built the existing ethnic rivalry between the Gio and Mano against the Krahn and Mandingos, to reinforce his support base.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To counter Taylor, Samuel Doe sends his Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) battalions to Nimba county, where fighting that ensues with NPFL resulting in the killing of thousands of civilians, the displacement of people from their homes, the kidnapping and rape of children and women, as well as the torture of people and destruction of property.</li> <li>- Women's activism for peace commences, mostly focusing on humanitarian intervention and support of those displaced by the conflict.</li> <li>- NPFL forces launch a siege on Monrovia.</li> <li>- Prince Yormie Johnson breaks away from NPFL and forms his own faction Independent National Patriotic Front (INPFL).</li> <li>- Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sends peacekeeping military intervention forces to Liberia with the aim of enforcing a ceasefire, assisting to end the conflict and establishing an interim government.</li> <li>- Samuel Doe is captured by INPFL and brutally killed.</li> </ul>
<b>1990 to 1991</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The National Women Commission of Liberia and its emergency arm Women in Action for Good Will is established.</li> <li>- ECOWAS creates Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), which succeeds in persuading Taylor and Johnson to accept the intervention.</li> <li>- Several peacekeeping conferences and meetings are organized by ECOWAS.</li> <li>- The United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO) is formed by supporters of the late Samuel Doe.</li> </ul>
<b>1992</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ECOMOG declares an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) appointing as their president Amos Sawyer.</li> </ul>
<b>1993</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ECOWAS brokers a peace agreement in Cotonou, Benin.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The United Nations Security Council establishes the UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) to assist implement the peace deal.</li> </ul>
<b>1994</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Liberian Women Initiative is formed, and the focus is on mediating, lobbying support and networking to bring an end to the conflict.</li> <li>- Another round of fighting begins in May 1994, with devastating effects.</li> <li>- Leaders of the fighting factions meet in September 1994 Akosombo, Ghana and the Akosombo Agreement is signed, and a supplement agreement signed again in Accra, Ghana in December.</li> <li>- LWI women are part of these conferences, but as observers only.</li> </ul>
<b>1995</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- President Jerry Rawlings of Ghana brokers a peace agreement, which is signed by the rebel factions.</li> <li>- Taylor agrees to a ceasefire and to plans of demobilization and disarmament of his troops.</li> <li>- National presidential and legislative elections are scheduled for 1996.</li> </ul>
<b>1996</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Another bloody fighting breaks out April 1996, and peace is brokered in August following the signing of the Abuja Accord in Nigeria, with agreement to disarm and demobilize factions by 1997. Thus the containment of the first civil war.</li> <li>- September Ruth Perry is appointed chairwoman to head the Liberian National Transitional Government till 1997 when elections will be held.</li> </ul>
<b>1997</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Presidential elections are held in July and Charles Taylor and his NPFL emerge victorious with 75 percentage win of poll.</li> <li>- Ruth Perry hands over power Charles Taylor, president-elect in August 1997</li> </ul>
<b>Liberia's Second Civil War: 1999 to 2003</b>	
<b>1999</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebels, mostly from the Mandingo and Krahn ethnic groups of Liberia,</li> </ul>

	<p>commanded by Sekou Conneh and supported by the government of Guinea Conakry, begin the attack on Taylor's government from northern Liberia in April, thus marking the start of the Second Liberian Civil War.</p>
<b>2000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A group of rebel fighters from the United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy (ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K) who had fought against Taylor during the first Civil War, join forces with LURD.</li> <li>- The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel forces from Liberia and Sierra Leone, still loyal to Taylor's launch a counter-attack on Guinea with the aim to diminish its support for LURD.</li> <li>- Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) a regional women's organization by women from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea is founded.</li> </ul>
<b>2001</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Taylor's forces are forced to retreat back to Liberia and Sierra Leone, with the conflict having now taken three dimensions (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea).</li> <li>- Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) Liberia is established and engages in non-violent activism to end the conflict for the sake of letting peace reign.</li> </ul>
<b>2002</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- LURD forces penetrate the stronghold of Taylor's government from the bushes of Southern Lofa County.</li> <li>- Taylor declares a state of emergency in February, as the LURD forces continue their attacks, making their way towards Monrovia</li> <li>- LURD rebels continue to carry out incursions, dominating government fighters in Bong, Bomi, and Montserrado counties and the towns of Gbarnga and Tubmanburg, as well as a raid on Arthington, just about 12 miles from the capital city, Monrovia</li> <li>- Taylor's government uplifts the state of emergency in September following claims that it has taken back the town of Bopolu from the LURD rebels</li> <li>- MARWOPNET convinces the presidents of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone to convene in Morocco for peace dialogues.</li> </ul>

<p><b>2003</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), an Ivoirian-backed rebel group is formed. Under the leadership of Thomas Nimely, they stage their attacks against Taylor’s government from southern Liberia, further worsening the already dire conflict situation.</li> <li>- WIPNET Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace and the non-violent campaign for peace is launched.</li> <li>- The rebels close in on the capital Monrovia both from the north and the south, and by May through to July, Taylor’s government controls and command only one-third of the country.</li> <li>- WIPNET Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace and the non-violent campaign for peace women succeed to persuade Taylor and the rebel groups to convene in Ghana for the peace negotiation dialogues that eventually resulted in a deal that ended the conflict.</li> <li>- In June, ECOWAS’ chairman, President John Kufuor of Ghana organizes a peace conference in Accra, Ghana, to get the warring factions to negotiate a peace agreement.</li> <li>- Charles Taylor is indicted for war crimes and crimes against humanity while the peace conference is ongoing.</li> <li>- Amidst ongoing peace talks in Accra, LURD forces launch a siege on Monrovia in July, leading to the killing of thousands of civilians and displacement of people and families.</li> <li>- LURD declares a ceasefire on July 29, and ECOWAS to send troops to keep peace in Monrovia. - President Charles Taylor resigns from office on August 11 and goes on exile in Nigeria.</li> <li>- On August 18, the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) is signed; a National Transition Government of Liberia is established and Gyude Bryant is appointed as president; and Liberia’s first post-civil war national election is programmed for 2005.</li> </ul>
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**Sources:** Tripp (2015); Ouellet (2013); Moran (2012); McCarthy (2011); Gariba (2011); TRC Liberia - Final Report (2009); Massaquoi (2007).

### **1.2.3. A brief on women's initiatives towards ending the civil wars**

Important to note in the above context is, the civil wars in Liberia instigated the formation and rise of women's organizations, whose key focus was to ensure a state of peace, normalcy, and security return back to Liberia. To this effect, the Liberian Women Initiative (LWI) was established in 1994, and Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) in 2001 and Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace in 2003, under the leadership Mother Mary Brownell and Leymah Gbowee, respectively. So like any other armed conflict in the world, the Liberian history presented a case where women were unfortunately exposed to bear a disproportionate amount of the brunt of the civil wars (Rehn and Sirleaf 2002). Tripp (2015: 82) draws attention to the fact that over forty six peace talks were convened during the first civil war. But, to the dismay of sustainable peace advocates and detriment of durable peace prospects, the conferences all failed to accord women their rightful place in charting the way forward to peace (Iwilade 2011). Regardless of the odds stacked against them, the women of LWI and WIPNET Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace, demonstrated enduring resilience and a determined resolve to cope with the quasi-insurmountable challenges of war and exclusion during both conflicts (Alaga, 2011). In essence, these women's organizations embarked with enthusiasm to influence the outcome of the peace processes that ended Liberia's protracted conflict. Their active engagements were widely supported by other women groups and organizations, amongst them being the Mano River Women of Peace Network (MARWOPNET), who under the invitation and sponsorship of ECOWAS, was eventually made signatory to the peace accord (Popovic 2009: 8). Basically, the collective efforts and prominent roles of women's organizations set the necessary platform for (re)building new lives for their families, communities, and society at large (Alaga 2011: 1; Ouellet 2013: 14). A comprehensive analysis of women's initiatives and activism for peace during and in the aftermath of the Liberian conflict is presented in chapter five of this study.

### **1.3. Parameters of the women-peacebuilding discourse**

From the background and profiling of the Liberian history, the study ascertains that women's participation in peacebuilding provides the political and socio-economic buoyancy and balance for the advancement of sustainable peace and security processes. This is because

conceptual literature around the women and peacebuilding nexus lay quite some emphasis on the need and importance of approaches that are people-centred, and ingrained in the structure of peacebuilding processes before, during and in the matter of post-conflict. This simply is to say that the processes must be responsive to the specific needs/interests and susceptibilities of diverse groups and sections of society. However, the inquiry about women's position in the equation of (post-) conflict peacebuilding agendas remains ambiguously defined, the implication being the problem of their under-representation in the affairs of decision-making. For example, drawing from the Liberian experience, McCarthy (2011: 90) alludes that the outbreak of Liberia's second civil war to some extent owed to the fact that women were largely excluded from the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) processes. Tripp (2015: 95) also avers that it can be attributed to the fact that the decision-makers and the government did not take into consideration the counsel of women to completely demobilize and disarm factions before the holding of the 1997 elections. Pankhurst (2003:160) and Alaga (2010:4) draw attention to the fact that such security arrangements as made-believed by most cultures, societies, and certain practices of policies, have traditionally been dominated by men and continue to be rhetorically defined in the militarist sense as a male undertaking. Not only does this approach to security engagements emasculate the prospects for gender-responsive strategies, but it also hinders the objectives of practically desegregating inclusivity and equal participation (El-Bushra 2012).

Further contentions by True (2013:1-4) call attention to the reality of women's peacebuilding roles as being often times made complex by limitations or failure of post-conflict policies to equally address the socio-economic injustices faced by women pre- to post-conflict. This challenge inhibits their active involvement and increases institutional and structural gender disparities between men and women. Besides, Domingo *et.al* (2013) pinpoint that various policy agendas and societies tend to either limit women's roles to certain specificities or treat them as a homogenous whole despite the realities of their backgrounds and social groupings. This as a result overlooks not only the needs and interests they may have, but the different perspectives and approaches they can contribute to post-conflict development agendas (Domingo *et.al* 2013). To this end, the United Nations (2010) also highlights that literature approaches have adopted the tendency of defining and limiting women's peacebuilding roles

to social justice, social cohesion, and economic revitalization agendas (Collaborative Learning Projects 2012).

The above perspectives are critical for understanding the subject of women and peacebuilding. There also exists a comprehensive body of literature that appraises and debates from different perspectives the subject of women and peacebuilding in the African contexts and Liberia to be specific. For example, Alaga (2011) looks at the resourcefulness of women in the Liberian peace process; Massaquoi (2007) researches on women and post-conflict development in Liberia, advancing a rights-based approach to state-building as an alternate for attaining development for women; Ouellet (2013) explores women and religion in peace and reconciliation, with a focus on Liberia; Jaye (2010) and Gariba (2011) both research on post-conflict development in Liberia, but from a generic and not women-focused perspective; Cole's (2011) study focuses on how to increase women's political participation in Liberia; and Tripp (2015) elaborates on "Women and Power in Post-conflict Africa", with Liberia being one of its case studies. Other studies by (Moser 1991; Reardon 1993; Pankhurst and Anderlini 1998; McKay and Mazurana 2001; McKay 2004; Mpoumou 2004; Puechguirbal 2005; Rehn and Sirleaf 2002; and Woroniuk 2001; Gizelis 2013; among others), also examine and share perspectives on the subject of women and conflict, post-conflict, peacebuilding, peace operations; women's movements and/or organizations in conflict and post-conflict, etc. Albeit this, there are sparse scholarly considerations that ascetically assess:

- i. Women's evolving role in peacebuilding and decision-making from past to present, as well as a comprehensive examination of their role as it relates to each of the defined pillars of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development framework;
- ii. The diversity of women roles as informed by their strategic interests traversing their distinctive networks of organizations in Liberia, and how such diversity influence the different peacebuilding objectives and outcomes; and
- iii. How Liberian women can re-establish a rallying point and again unite, this time around to overcome the institutional and human challenges they are confronted with in their peacebuilding roles.



That these perspectives have not been considerably incorporated into the women and peacebuilding scholarship framework, speaks to the lacunae in the current discourse, which this study assays to fill. Moreover, there remains the growing need for literature on how the processes of peacebuilding and reconstruction underpin or address women's practical and strategic interests/needs. Similarly, inquiries regarding whether and just how established policy instruments on women's issues have in practice created a wider space for their inclusiveness or strengthened their participation in the agenda of post-conflict developments continue to materialize. Besides, following the ten years review of UNSCR 1325 the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM 2010) reported that women's participation and representation in negotiating major peace processes still remains outstandingly minimal. Mirroring these in the framework of post-conflict Liberia further prods interrogations about the increasing consciousness to recognize and advance the role of Liberian women in peacebuilding, and where they are at today as in their roles as peacebuilders. In addition, the study in broader terms conjures inquiries about:

- i. The implications of having a female president vis-à-vis concerns around women/gender friendly policies, and
- ii. Women's absolute and active involvement and equal representation in decision-making processes at all levels, from bottom-up to the top-down and from the formulation to implementation phases.

The parameters discussed above constitute the problem which this study endeavours to address. In this consideration, the study examines the different strategies that underlie women's peacebuilding potentials and how they inform their strategic interests using the organizational approach propounded by Maxine Molyneux. It further explores the implications of women's roles in the arena of peace, security, socio-economic and political developments in the framework of post-conflict recovery agendas. This, the study accomplishes through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews carried out with a number of organizations<sup>9</sup> in Liberia, especially women organizations. These organizations

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<sup>9</sup> A profile of these organizations from which the study drew its research participants, is presented in 'Appendix II' at the end of this dissertation.



include the Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL<sup>10</sup>); Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET); National Women's Commission of Liberia (NAWOCOL); Liberian Female Law Enforcement Association (LIFLEA); Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) urban and grassroots<sup>11</sup>; Development Education Network -Liberia (DEN-L); and Ganta Concern Women Development Association (Ganta Concern Women). The choice of the organizations owe to their visibly active roles during Liberia's conflict years, and the proactive contributions they continue to make towards the effective reconstruction of Liberia, nationally and locally. Similarly, the study conducts interviews with prominent peace activists like Mother Mary Brownell; and other important stakeholders in Liberia's post-conflict development processes, including the Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection (MoGCSP); United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Office of Gender Advisor (OGA); and the Press Union of Liberia (PUL).

#### **1.4. Research framework**

The study is premised on the argument that the practical inclusion, representation, and participation of women at all levels of (post-) conflict recovery processes is imperative for the attainment of peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development objectives. However, to ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of the processes and objectives, as well as the active involvement of women to their full potentials, the following must be taken into consideration:

- i. The different nature and perspectives of women's experiences, which not only informs their practical and strategic interests/needs, but also has various implications for the post-conflict outcomes;
- ii. Holistic approaches to peacebuilding that straddle and are gender-responsive to the foundational post-conflict activities of security sector reform and transformation;

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<sup>10</sup> WONGOSOL is an umbrella organization that coordinates a network of 104 member organizations all over the fifteen counties of Liberia, straddling non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community based Organization (CBOs), and faith-based organizations (FBOs). It was from this organization that the gate-keepers letter to carry out research with some of its registered Women's organizations in Liberia was gotten.

<sup>11</sup> The reference or use of the term grassroots organizations or grassroots levels both mean 'rural' in the context of this study.

justice and reconciliation; socio-economic well-being; governance and participation; and

- iii. The availability of sufficient public support and resources to coalesce women's involvement in peacebuilding and reconstruction activities at all levels of society.

## **1.5. Research questions**

This study built on an inquiry that sought to understand the *raison d'être* for the particular focus on the role of women in peacebuilding and qualifies them as such. Following through this inquiry, the study therefore answers these research questions:

- i. How instrumental have women and women's organizations been in empowering peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction and development processes (security sector reform, justice and reconciliation, socio-economic welfare, and governance and political participation) in Liberia?
- ii. How has women's participation in peacebuilding addressed their practical and strategic needs/interests?
- iii. What roles do the state/government and international organizations play in these processes?
- iv. How has Liberia's post-conflict gender politics of having a female president influenced the current positioning of women's role and participation in decision-making processes?
- v. What is the nature of the challenges that Liberian women are grappling with in the performance of their roles as peacebuilders, and what is the way forward?
- vi. What lessons and recommendations can be garnered from women's involvement in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture?

## 1.6. Research objectives

In attending to the research questions, the study empirically appraised and generated critical insights on the efficacy of Liberian women's contribution to the country's peacebuilding architecture from the period marking the commencement of its first civil war to present. The study therefore sought to:

- i. Probe into the instrumentality of the aforementioned women's organizations' in empowering peace in Liberia, and how their contributions continue to drive the consolidation and implementation of the country's post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development agenda.
- ii. Critically appraise how diversified women's practical and strategic interests have been addressed by their different networks of organizations in Liberia.
- iii. Determine the progression of where Liberian women are at in their current peace efforts by probing the implication of the post-conflict development gender politics of having a female president.
- iv. Explore the state/government-centred and the international community's role in establishing policies and platforms that strengthen women's peacebuilding and reconstruction efforts.
- v. Examine the challenges confronting women in their roles as peacebuilders, and make recommendations for a framework of action moving forward.
- vi. Assess lessons that can be learnt from the Liberian experience to ascertain its implications for theoretical and empirical research on the subject of women and peacebuilding, and develop guidelines and questions for further research.

The above contexts of the research questions and objectives also explore how inclusive the processes are of women's participation at all phases and levels and in what way organizational approaches to realizing women's diverse organizational interests impact outcomes of the post-conflict activities. It equally looks how the role of the government, local, and international

bodies intermingle with those of women's organizations to ensure the sustainability of Liberia's post-conflict agendas.

### **1.7. Purpose and significance of the research**

This study seeks to increase understanding on the relevance of women's role in Liberia's peacebuilding processes. Thus, the study is significant for its conceptual delineation, which includes narrowing its analysis to the nexus between women and peacebuilding in relation to women's human and civil rights to recognition and participation, as well as to issues of sustainable peace and developments in the post-conflict context. The geographic importance of this study is the focus on the Liberian analytical context of women's experiences in peacebuilding as a case in point. This context is expounded to embody a comprehensive narrative of a history that has witnessed remarkable changes in their ability to move incrementally from their roles as silent participants in mainstream political, economic, social and security developments of the state, to proactive contributors and architects in same processes. Therefore, the study presents the women and peacebuilding rapport in terms of the assortments of ways in which they influence decision-making processes; mobilize support and are empowered by different post-conflict recovery activities; and the reality of the limitations and challenges that confront them.

The study draws attention to the reality of the gendered nature of (post-) conflict processes, especially in terms of the inequality that exists in security and political arrangements and the dynamics that surround women's descriptive and substantive representation in the processes. The concept of inequality, as illustrated in the subsequent chapters, spans policy formulation and implementation. It constitutes a key question for theory and practice, which is particularly fleshed out in the framework of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development, and Maxine Molyneux's organizational theory adopted by the study. As such, the study is theoretically significant in that it provides the window of opportunity for the redefinition of gender roles and the rule of law, as well as the platform for women to take up leadership positions at the different levels of society. However, the full materialization of such opportunities boils down to the abilities of government and institutions to establish and practically implement processes that are people-centred and equally inclusive of all

(Khadiagala and Lyon 2006). Further significance of the research lays in the fact that it provides the theoretical basis to contextualize women organizing for peace as central to women's diverse practical and strategic gender interests (Molyneux 1985, 1998, 2001). Through this theory, the study builds on the various perspectives on:

- i. How Liberian women organizing around their practical interests of survival and pressing social and economic demands in wartime, mobilized to influence change in the immediate state of affairs of the two civil wars.
- ii. How achieving their primary interests translated to the formation of their strategic interests of challenging women's marginalization, by advocating policies for women's equal inclusion in public decision-making processes, while remaining active in mobilizing and encouraging women's visible participation in the processes of reconstruction.
- iii. How a directive definition of both interests and transformation of the practical to strategic have provided the platform for women's involvement and impact in Liberia's current environment.

The study's knowledge building on these theoretical frameworks is mainly to lay some foundation for consolidated peaceful opportunities for women and women organizations to contribute to the socio-political and economic development of society. It also aims to contribute to an understanding of the intricacies of peacebuilding in post-conflict societies and sheds lights on the interconnectedness of the processes and the emerging roles of women therein. So, embedded in this discourse of women and peacebuilding is the realization that women are central to the enablement of peace and decision-making processes. More than a few perspectives advance same, with the first contending that women through their idiosyncratic and sometimes reciprocated experiences of conflict provide a gendered specific and transformative perspective to peacebuilding both at the structural and practical levels (Alaga 2010:2). While the second asserts that the eventual attainment of sustainable peace is feasibly and conceivably dependent on the active inclusion of the women half that makes up societies, and both men and women must be partakers in agendas of post-conflict developments (Ernest 1997:7; Schirch 2004:5).

Exploring women's role also means unravelling their development trajectory, which is fundamental to locate women's agency and the current nature of their peacebuilding relationship. In this consideration, the study is also important for its contribution to literature on the transformational praxis of women's role from past to present.<sup>12</sup> Further contributions to this study are apparent in the methodological approach employed for this research (as presented in chapter four), and the way forward advanced by the study for addressing the challenges thwarting women's participation in peacebuilding processes in Liberia. The study anticipates to trigger wider debates and shape knowledge that is relevant to the scholarly community on the subject of women and peacebuilding. Likewise, it aims to serve as a possible tool for women's organizations, policy makers, and other stakeholders involved in overseeing and enhancing effective post-conflict development processes in Liberia and beyond.

## **1.8. Structure of the research**

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters. The chapters are structured to each begin with an introduction and in some instances and excerpt, followed by basic and in-depth discussions and analyses of the chapter's theme of focus, and a summary conclusion. Chapters five, six and seven are narrative presentations and analyses of primary data that aligns with, as well as challenges existing literature, and reflects on the implications of the research findings for theory and practice. In this manner,

**Chapter One** provides an overview of the women and peacebuilding discourse. It lays down the foundation of the study and encapsulates the direction the research is expected to take. It provides an orientation of the research theme by putting into context the subject of women and peacebuilding that captures a brief history of the Liberian conflict and women's experiences therein. The chapter also identifies the research problem, outlines the research questions and hypotheses, specific objectives, and discusses the rationale and relevance of the

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<sup>12</sup> This contribution to the study is presented in chapter two of this dissertation, and has already been published for reference as - Shulika L.S (2016) Women and Peace building: From Historical to Contemporary African Perspectives. Ubuntu: Journal of Conflict and Social Transformation Volume 5, Number 1, 2016 Pp 7- 31.

study. Finally, the chapter presents a synopsis of how the units of the dissertation are structured and the concluding remarks.

**Chapter Two** on literature review looks at the changing landscape and framework of women's peacebuilding role. It reviews different areas of relevant literature on women and peacebuilding in Africa. This includes literature on the historical underpinnings of women's roles from the past through to this contemporary era to better ground perspectives on the women-peacebuilding nexus. It also examines literature on women as conflict instigators, combatants, caregivers and peacebuilders, as well as literature policy instruments affirmative to the important role of women in decision-making and peace processes, and the exercise of these roles through women's organizations. The chapter is further presented with an accent on exploring the knowledge gap in existing studies that are also peculiar to Liberia. Thus, it reviews scholarly perspectives on women's roles in peacebuilding, while appraising the African women's leadership and peacebuilding agency prior to and in the contemporary consciousness.

**Chapter Three** presents the theoretical frameworks that underlie the study. These include post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development theory, as well as Maxine Molyneux's organizational theory. The conceptualization of these theories is captured in the question: how is peace built in post-conflict societies and how do women organizations fit into the equation, as its thematic focus. Reflective of the topic of this study, the use of the two theories serve to build on rife perspectives of identifying critical contextual and substantive elements at the helm of post-conflict developments and the agency of women organizations as dynamic architects in shaping the processes. So, the use of the post-conflict theory in this study sets the pace for subsequent analyses that underscore its implementation as an all-inclusive and cogitated framework for managing and enhancing the platform for desired sustainability of the post-conflict agenda. Likewise, Maxine Molyneux's organizational theory is used in the analytical chapters that follow to explore women's peacebuilding roles in Liberia as imperative for the consolidation and operative realization of the country's post-conflict processes.



**Chapter Four** discusses the research methodology and methods of the study. It reflects of the qualitative methodology, the use of secondary and primary data sources, the purposive sampling and content and narrative data analyses methods adopted by the study. The chapter also justifies motives for the choice of these research methods, it profiles the participants as the subject matter of the research, discusses ethical issues, the limitations of the study, as well as challenges encountered before and during the process of data collection in Liberia

**Chapter Five** focuses on the pursuit of peace, experiences and approaches of women and women organizations in Liberia. This chapter, being the principal unit of this study, draws field discussions to establish the coming into being of women's organizations in Liberia and their journey in the pursuit of peace for the country. Engaging both the historical and practical analyses of women's proactive role and contributions to peacebuilding in Liberia, the chapter elaborates how women's involvement builds from their experiences of conflict, how it defines, captures, and addresses their basic and strategic needs. In this given, the chapter builds on Molyneux's views of 'practical and strategic interests and appraises how women's strategic interests, which has to do with their position in society, are diversified across their different networks of organizations in Liberia. This, the chapter achieves by engaging discussions on women's individual agencies and mixt organizational strategies they employ(ed) to challenge the patriarchal structures of conflict for the resolve of peace. In discussing these strategies, note is taken of how the assumption of different peacebuilding approaches by women have even in the matter of post-conflict continued to influence the outcomes of security sector reform, justice and reconciliation, socio-economic wellbeing, and governance and political participation processes in Liberia.

**Chapter Six** examines the complementarity of the government, local, international institutions and women's roles in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture from the angle of an interpersonal support platform. This chapter explores how the government of Liberia and international and local organizations support women and women's organizations to build and enhance long-term peace and security in Liberia. This chapter is necessary because women organizations do not operate in a vacuum, and their roles as peacebuilders remain incomplete without the support of these stakeholders in the implementation of post-conflict processes. The chapter records that established policies by these stakeholders consistent with



UNSCR 1325 to empower and promote women's political participation and governance, represent efforts to address some of the challenges to women's roles in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture.

**Chapter Seven** assesses the challenges to women's peacebuilding role in Liberia. It stems from the premise that despite women's instrumental peacebuilding roles and the support from government and other organizational bodies, women continue to face challenges in their efforts to consolidate peace and influence sustainable post-conflict processes. The chapter discusses in broader terms the nature and dynamics of factors that limit women's distinctive roles as peacebuilders. These challenges range from marginal representation, lack of capacity building skills and development opportunities, domestic and sexual violence against women and girls, disunity amongst women groups, patriarchy and ingrained cultural practices, etc. The chapter also notes that despite the significant progress made by women in building peace, they have lost the rally point that united them to fight for the peace Liberia celebrates today, thus a major challenge in itself.

**Chapter Eight** draws summative insights from all the chapters and concludes the study by recapping the research findings and observations on the subject of women and peacebuilding in Liberia. The section discusses the contributions of the study, as well as lessons that can be learnt from the Liberian experience to develop guidelines for policy considerations for women's organizations and questions for further research.

## **1.9. Conclusion**

This chapter focused on locating and providing context to the women-peacebuilding discourse. It noted that the subject of women and peacebuilding has attracted widespread debates internationally, with one recurrent theme being the challenge of women's unequal representation and marginalization in formal decision-making processes. The chapter also alluded that adoption of UNSCR 1325, among others briefly mentioned, has led to substantial changes and the rolling acceptance that the practical inclusion of women in all phases and levels of decision-making is vital for the success and sustainability of the peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development processes. Despite this growing acknowledgement of women's contributions and importance to peace and development agendas through their

various organizations cum movements-linked advocacies and approaches, the complexities they face remain enormous. From this, the chapter focused on locating and providing context to the women-peacebuilding relationship and discourse. So in developing the background of the study, the Liberian conflict history and a brief on the role of women therein was discussed. This was deemed necessary in order to understand the basis for women's evolving peacebuilding roles and the backdrop of what constitutes round about the parameters of the women-peacebuilding debate. Furthermore, the chapter identified the research problem, and encapsulated that the leitmotif of the study is a comprehensive assessment of women's role and limitations, therefore, using the framework of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development, and the organizational positioning of what underpins women organizations. It also stated the purpose and significance of the study. Basically, this chapter laid the foundation for all the other chapters that follow in this dissertation. The next chapter focuses on reviewing relevant literature, identifying the gaps the study would fill through further contextualization of the women and peacebuilding discourse.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW: WOMEN IN PEACEBUILDING AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY PERSPECTIVES

#### 2.1. Introduction

In the current international conflict and peace settings, the attentiveness to the need for women's inclusion in decision-making at all levels of society in peace processes continue to emerge and is advocated for as strategic to the effective implementation and sustainability of post-war reconstruction agendas. Pursuant to this burgeoning international consensus on the women-peacebuilding link, literature replete on the subject spans women in/and development in conflict and post-conflict, women and leadership, and women's organizations and movements, as briefly delineated in the previous chapter. In reviewing the contents of this literature, this chapter builds on the overarching question about the precise emphasis on women in peacebuilding, by focusing on scholarship within the African contexts as well as international policy developments. To clearly comprehend the inquiry, the chapter begins with a background presentation that appraises the role of women in decision-making governance and their peacebuilding prowess prior to contemporary consciousness. Thus, it expounds that the framework of current discourses on women's role in peacebuilding did not evolve in a vacuum and should be understood as underpinned by historical perspectives that are invariably interconnected to the present.

Reviewing the women-peacebuilding nexus by delving into the past provides a conceptual and nuanced understanding of how the changing landscape of women's role in society have engendered current debates, policies, researches and literature. In this regard, deconstructing existing literature on women in/and peacebuilding within the context of this study draws into debate women's diverse roles in conflict and post-conflict situations. This examination takes into consideration women's roles as conflict instigators and combatants, and as caregivers and peace activists, agents and peacebuilders. Furthermore, the chapter reviews literature on

the internationalization of women's roles through policy developments that seek to strengthen and promote women's equal participation in decision-making and peacebuilding governance. This literature sets the basis for a better understanding of distinct developments that embody women's recognition and rights, women's association as organizations to empower the ends of peace, and the onus of post-conflict peacebuilding. In this manner, this chapter purports that the literature review of different standpoints on women and peacebuilding is critical for a comprehensive understanding of their proclivity and agency to:

- i. Intervene in the resolution of conflicts, and
- ii. Equally contribute to the operationalization and eventual sustainability of peacebuilding processes.

But against the backdrop of these scholarship and literature, remain the paucity of research/knowledge gap on women and peacebuilding in the (post-) conflict, which the chapter identifies and further underlines the relevance of the study.

## **2.2. Historical perspectives of women's roles in the African contexts**

The African continent is host to a significant diversity of cultures which are representative of countries, villages and ethnic communities. Inherent in this diversity were and are patriarchal structures and the identity of women's cultural, traditional or conventional roles as defined by society. This background on women's earlier recognition and role in the African contexts captures the pre-colonial through to colonial era. Hence, beyond the common thinking that African women in pre-colonial times were sheer instruments of male hegemony and their roles limited to birthing and household duties, several studies<sup>13</sup> have contended contrarily emphasizing the consciousness and public contributions of women in that era. According to Tamale (2000:9) the structural setting of pre-colonial Africa afforded women socio-political and economic platforms for engagement in leadership, decision-making and peacebuilding processes. In same understanding, Isike (2009:41) asserts that the participation of African women in the leadership affairs of their societies, communities, families and continent at large

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<sup>13</sup> See studies by Staudt (1989), Agorsah (1990), St. Clair (1994), Amadiume (1987 and 1997), Tamale (2000), Sadiki (2001), Isike (2009), Afisi (2010), etc.

preceded colonialism and the independence of most African countries. In the same train of thought, Afisi (2010:230) maintains that the unity and harmony of several traditional African societies were grounded on the prowess of women prior to colonialism. Further analysis by the author suggests that women's ability to navigate the social space at the time owed to the fact that their positions as those of the men were not predominantly configured by gender but complementary of the other (Afisi 2010:230). Viewed from this perspective, the inference is that there was a systematic assimilation of roles assumed by both genders, which were correspondingly indispensable to the family as well as society's continuance, peaceful co-existence, and development. However, this is not to say patriarchy did not exist, seeing as the status of the African women remained viewed as second class to that of their male counterparts (Tamale 2000; Isike 2009; Afisi 2010).

Speaking of women's socio-economic grounding in pre-colonial Africa, Tamale (2000:9) contends that the division of labour in most African societies was apportioned in accordance with gender or sex. However, such distributions of responsibilities were not oriented or structured along the margins of productive and reproductive undertakings (like agricultural and pastoral activities where they were primary producers and reproducers of labour), given that majority of the women were fully involved in both (Tamale 2000, and Isike 2009). According to Amadiume (1987), these gender divisions were also flexible and accommodating because both women and men could still assume the roles of the other, as was the case of the Igbos of Nigeria and other ethnicities in pre-colonial Africa.

### **2.2.1. Social context**

Socially, the subsistence, success and unity of the family, and the expectations for lifelong and sustainable matrimonies, which included most importantly the bearing of children, were greatly contingent on the African woman (Afisi 2010:229). These aspects of her social status as a woman were as such very fundamental to African existence and continuity. Correspondingly, educating and instilling in children the appropriate moral, ethical, cultural and societal values, either as individual women or as culturally formed social groups<sup>14</sup> further

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<sup>14</sup> In Liberia, confederacies or secret societies like the Sande of Northwestern Liberia and the country women from the Vai, Gola, Dei, Mende, Gbandi, Lorma, Kpelle and part of Mano tribes of Central and Western Liberia

constituted an essential dimension of the social obligations of pre-colonial African women (Afsi 2010:229, and Isike 2009:43). In Liberia as other African countries, women were regarded as the flagship of family permanence, at all times present to support families and societies financially and morally, while ensuring peace (Joe 2004, and Government of Liberia/UN 2011).

The documentation of scholarship in light of this social consciousness of African women therefore attributed the crux of womanhood and motherhood to a sacredness imbued in their intrinsic cultural and ideological worth of humility, forbearance, compassion, peacefulness and guidance of not only the family virtues, but the community and society's co-existence (UNESCO 2003). Through the institution of marriage for example, women were said to unite families, tribes and communities, thus having as a moral obligation the sustenance of these qualities in most notably the girl child from the early stages of childhood development<sup>15</sup> (Isike, 2009:50). Linked to this social status, was also the responsibility of the women to provide material resources for the upkeep of their families which meant engaging in economic activities like farming, manufacturing, trade and craft making outside the normal household duties (Rojas 1990 & Ogbomo 1997). Significant in the socialization archetype of pre-colonial and traditional African women is the fact that the construal of her social identity greatly shaped her involvement in society's affairs through the development of their new roles in the sphere of economic empowerment.

### **2.2.2. Economic context**

Economically, pre-colonial African women outrivalled the economic domain through the market grids and systems they established (Tamale 2000:9). Among the Kikuyu women of Kenya for example, women and women organizations undertook socio-economic, political and judicial responsibilities through an "age-segmented institution called *ndundu*" (Stamp 1975:25). In the case of Ghana, women had complete authority and charge of the profits

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leverage (d) socially in terms of their responsibilities in the institution and training of young girls transition into adulthood, which required inculcating in them moral and appropriate sexual conduct and the values of marriage (Government of Liberia/UN 2011: 24).

<sup>15</sup> Nigeria, Cameroon, Namibia, Tanzania, and Somalia also represent a few examples of countries whose communities and societies, as stated by Isike (2009), embodied and practiced these virtues.

accrued from their trade and market dealings (Tamale 2000). Exemplifying with the case of Nigeria, Asifi (2010:233) while making reference to women like Queen Aminat of Zaria and Madam Tinubu of Abeokuta, articulates that women in pre-colonial Africa were significantly conspicuous in trading businesses. At the level of agricultural trade, women, notwithstanding the sexual partitioning of responsibilities, controlled and coordinated quite a number of farming and animal husbandry activities allotted to both genders (Gordon 1996:29).

According to Isike (2009:42), this economic positioning of women varied from one pre-colonial and traditional African society to another and was, especially in the kinship settings often balanced and harmonized with the men's roles. On a general note therefore, Gordon (1996:29) and Tamale (2000:9) maintain that women in most pre-colonial and traditional African setting not only represented a dynamic force in the trading business but also exerted and maintained considerable economic influence and autonomy. Considering Liberia as a working example, scholarship designates that its economy remained quite traditional in terms of its farming to trading trend, with women being at the center of the development (Joe 2004). With agriculture being the main source of economic development in Liberia, the Liberian women accordingly contributed a great deal to the financial sustainability of her home through agricultural farming activities (Nagbe 2010). A study conducted by the Government of Liberia/UN (2011), also notes that 60% of rice, corn, cassava and other food yields in the domain of agriculture were produced through the efforts of Liberian women in the traditional setting. It is thought-provoking to articulate that these socio-economic foundations that characterized women's roles unremittingly provided them with the platform to engage in political activities, especially through their social and trading networks.

### **2.2.3. Political context**

Politically, pre-colonial African women, while not holding equal positions of public leadership as their male equals, were active in politics and governments<sup>16</sup> (Fyle 1999). The unavoidable link between the social and the political was contained in the socio-cultural

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<sup>16</sup> This perspective of women's public participation in the political affairs of communities, societies and the continent as presented in the works of Amadiume (1987 and 1997) however conflicts with the limited Eurocentric and Westernized narrations that portrayed the political roles of pre-colonial African women as merely faint and largely subordinate to that of men.



importance of marriage, especially where the union occurred in royal or influential families. According to Rojas (1990), such union provided women with the platform to indirectly influence political decision-making through their involvement in family meetings that sought to inform changes in families and society. Ogbomo (1997) also affirms that through general family gatherings and traditional organizations and groups, pre-colonial African women were able to voice their views both privately and publicly. Likewise, they had inordinate governance and influence on their spouses and male members of their families.<sup>17</sup>

Propping further on the formation of women organizations, Amadiume (1997) contends that through this medium and other established women's councils, women maintained quite a level of public authority and power in their various communities. The Sande (women) secret society of north western Liberia is said to have held such political sway in their multi- and pan-ethnic chiefdoms and groupings. Through this union, the Sande individually as a group and also in unity with the Poro (men) secret society could assemble communities and the populace under the authority of elders. In this society, women executed political and socio-cultural activities, such as arbitration and resolution of relational/community disagreements, amongst other economic obligations (Countries and their Cultures Forum - Culture of Liberia; Government of Liberia/UN 2011). An example of women exercising such leadership and public decision-making roles is recapped by Leymah Gbowee (2013) as drawn from a young woman's non-violent example to ending a crisis situation, where she recounted:

“A man from our village married a woman from another village and beat up his wife almost every day.... One of the community women complained to her husband and the women in the community highlighting the need for them to intervene and stop the man from abusing his wife, but she was told to let go because ‘it is a private matter’. When the abuse resulted in the woman suffering from a broken leg, the outspoken woman from the community lobbied the women and told them that if they did not stop the abuse of their fellow woman, their husbands will copy same and practice it on them... Seeing as the men were silent on the issue of the abusive husband, the women decided that they the women will gather at Sande (a secret society and a women's only space)

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<sup>17</sup> In the Owan community of Edo State Nigeria for example, the Idegbe which represented the unmarried and married daughters of a particular lineage, greatly swayed their husbands and brothers in resolving family issues pertaining to marriages. Their activism in family and society's affairs evidenced women's socio-economic and political responsiveness, especially as they were always consulted by their male counterparts prior to making conclusive decisions (Ogbomo 1997).



where the men are not allowed. So on agreed day at 5:00am, all women together with the female chief gathered at the Sande, and back in their homes, men were lost on what to do as the women were not there to carry out their supposed normal chores of taking care of the home, their children and men. Experiencing the disorder in the absence of their wives and the fact that the women meant business, the men started arguing among themselves who was responsible for the situation. By evening the men had held their own meeting and with the decision to take action against anyone community member who abuses the wife, they called on the women and pledged to them that such acts of abuse will never happen again”<sup>18</sup>

In addition to the women’s political role discourse, Fyle (1999) makes reference to the Mende and Sherbro ethnic groups in Sierra Leone where women in such traditional settings enjoyed the political seats of town and sub-region heads; the Iyalode female paragon of the Yoruba community in Nigeria who was at the helm of and orator for matters that concerned women at council level in the community; and the organized uprising of the Igbo and Ibibio women of Nigeria against British colonialism in 1929 (Amadiume 1997). In light of this, Sadiki (2001) and Isike (2009) maintain that women in pre-colonial Africa were quite proactive in influencing not only community governance and decisions, but also preponderant in the area of dispute resolution and preservation of communal peace.

#### **2.2.4. Peacebuilding context**

Peacebuilding wise, the intersection of African women’s social, economic and political roles in the pre-colonial era, was also interweaved with their ability to position themselves at the centre of peace processes across different communities. Several studies (Ngongo-Mbede 2003; Mohammed 2003; Guyo 2009; and Isike and Uzodike 2011; among others) on women’s peacebuilding positions before the advent of colonialism in Africa speak of their ability to engage different strategies like: consultation, prayers, mediation, caregiving, and traversing of group and ethnic boundaries to influence and work together for the purpose of peace. Among the Tupuri ethnic group of Cameroon for example, the elderly and matured women

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<sup>18</sup> This story as further stated by Leymah Gbowee (2013) motivated and helped them (the women of Liberia) to revolutionized the work they were doing in efforts to stop the Liberian conflict as they acknowledged that if the women in the story could challenge the structure of patriarchy, then they too could do something about the conflict situation in the country.

of society exclusively assumed the responsibilities of advisors, consultants, and mediators of communal conflicts (Ngongo-Mbede 2003:32). A thesis by Fatuma Boru Guyo (2009) also acknowledges the upholding of similar roles by the Orma and the Pokomo women in the Tana River District of Kenya in the resolution of pre-colonial conflicts. Guyo (2009:37-38) reveals that the older women in these communities acted in advisory roles and used their agency to impact policies through their husbands, sons and male relatives, which were considered vital guidelines for the prevention and resolution of the conflict between the Orma and the Pokomo peoples before colonialism. As noted by both authors, these women were recognized and respected in their communities as intermediaries and connoisseurs of conflict resolution.

Literature exemplifying peacebuilding efforts furring pre-colonial conflicts in Somali elaborates that women's roles were noted in their ability to overlook the conflict and ethnic divides in pursuit of peace through the tradition of marriage. According to Mohammed (2003:103), this peacebuilding strategy comprised unannounced visits by a young group of unmarried women from one of the combatting clans to the other, without the knowledge or approval of their family members. In the context of this practice, the preparation and marriage ceremony that ensued after the young women revealed their status to the rival clan, set the wheels for a peace negotiation that ultimately resulted in the resolution of the conflict (Mohammed 2003:103). Further appraisal by the author distinguishes another approach by Somali women to resolve inter and intra clan conflicts through the construction of human chains by women between the warring groups. This often was executed with a determined resolve by women to stay put until the factions withdrew, to prevent killings, and create the scenario for possible dialogue and negotiation. Isike and Uzodike (2011), Guyo (2009), and Mohammed (2003), commonly substantiate that women in pre-colonial Africa used an assortment of conflict resolution strategies; including praying for peace, serving as conciliators, and acting as peace envoys and facilitators in situations of societal conflicts.

Concluding on the fore-discussed historical reviews, it can be resolved that the socio-economic and political agency of women in pre-colonial Africa was defined by their aptitude as well as magnanimity to: maintain family bonds; nurture household and livelihoods; preserve family lives; perpetuate social harmony; and contribute to their economic

empowerment as well as development of society. Likewise, while the political dimension of women's peacebuilding efforts in the pre-colonial times is not distinctly detailed by the scholarships reviewed, the fundamental point is that women had the essential human skills and abilities to mediate and influence the resolution of conflicts. Postulating these realities is not to deny that women were marginalized or their roles challenged by hegemonic ideologies of maleness and the patriarchal nature of society, where the male was seen as more of a leader than his female counterpart. In the case of Liberia, as in other traditional settings across the continent, African women were considered the property of their husbands and their social contributions, despite being complemented by those of their male equals, were basically emasculated (Government of Liberia/UN 2011). In addition, even though women towered economically, they remained underpowered owing to lack of formal education and access to land and agrarian resources, the lack of appreciation for their agricultural contributions, and majority exclusion from decision-making structures (Countries and their Cultures Forum - Culture of Liberia; Government of Liberia/UN 2011; Nagbe 2010). Basically, it is resolute to construe that the prominence of women's roles in the pre-colonial times was symbolic of both agency, leadership, and marginalization, which are attributes present and in continuity contemporarily.

Against the backdrop of the above historical appraisal, scholars like Amadiume's (1987) and St. Clair (1994:27) have argued that the problem of marginalization more or less ensued and reached its peak with the advent of colonialism. According to Amadiume's (1987), the arrival of western colonialism chaperoned by the introduction of western education systems, legislations, Christianity and the modern state system of voting and electing leaders constituted a ruthless change to the socio-economic and political standing of African women in the past. Not only did this change severely subjugate and destroy existent traditional institutions, it also discounted women's economic influence and further confined their roles to household duties and subordinating them to men (Amadiume 1987). In light of this, St. Clair (1994:27) maintains that the commonality and vibrancy of women's role in traditional African societies was a pre-colonial ambiance, an oddity that changed with the dawn of colonialism. The understanding garnered from this discourse and the works of (Boserup 1970; Staudt 1981 & 1989; Dennis 1994; and Campbell 2003, etc.) who hold similar views, is that,

colonialism radically masculinized and feminized the roles of men and women. Likewise, it bred inequality between them that transcended to the post-colonial and today's modern era. Albeit these exclusionary colonial dynamics, scholarships<sup>19</sup> also elucidate that some African women<sup>20</sup> remained strategically active, seeing as they founded and joined resistance movements to fight for political independence through various community mobilization systems and structures.

### **2.3. Deconstructing the women and peacebuilding nexus in the context of current debates**

Literature probing the peacebuilding concept often attempts to expound on its underlying framework of integrated processes. In this context, Schirch (2008:9) defines peacebuilding as holistic strategies that engender meaningful responses to resolve conflicts non-violently, reduce direct violence, transform conflict relationships, and strengthen national capacity at all levels of the society. Realizing these processes entails undertaking them in tandem from the bottom up, the top down and the middle out (Lederach 1997). However, literatures index that the role of women therein remains obfuscated owing to their limited engagement in initial conflict strategies, and society's continual and biased portrayal of them as the feeble and vulnerable victims of war (Woroniuk 2001; Puechguirbal 2005). This explains why Women for Women International (2010:2) assert that:

“In times of war a woman's burdens only get heavier, her vulnerabilities more pronounced. ...despite these grim realities, she brings enormous energy, leadership and resilience to protecting families and rebuilding fractured communities. Yet, her essential voice remains absent from formal peace negotiations and her needs remain on the margins of reconstruction, development and poverty reduction programmes.”

This perspective of women's dilemmas has more or less been at the centre of the developments informing the women-peacebuilding debates. Feminist scholarship also theorizes that it resonates from the veracity of women's repression by gender inequality and power hierarchies that wedges throughout society (Wibben 2003; McCarthy 2011). However, Schirch and

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<sup>19</sup> See studies by Byanyima 1992; Amadiume 1997; Cooper 1994; Tamale 2000; Champell 2003; and Isike 2009.

<sup>20</sup> Examples include women in countries like Uganda, Mozambique, Angola, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa etc.

Sewak (2005) assert that women's role in peacebuilding is as ancient as their experience of violence and transcends cultures, civilizations, historical epochs, political divides, and geographic space. While these assertions are categorical, it however prods the question: "Why the particular focus on women in peacebuilding and what qualifies them as such?" Responding to this inquiry, attention is anchored on the detail that women, as discussed in 2.2 above, already leveraged such recognition socially, economically and politically prior to colonialism in Africa; on some feminist assertions; and especially literature on women's roles in conflict through to post-conflict.

Considering some feminist views in light of the above, scholars like Carrol (1987: 22) and Offen (1988:151) argue that women just like men are endowed with inalienable human rights that should not be denied them, hence the imperative to even out the political, economic and social balance of power between women and men in all spheres of society. According to Sharoni (1994:7) the historical realities of women's oppression and gender inequalities is a reality that necessitates strategies and practices that would eradicate women's marginalization by institutional structures and society. Making gender visible in peace processes brings to light the centrality of women's contributions in advancing and maintaining peaceful outcomes (Sharoni 1994:14). Meanwhile, Galtung (1996:40) likeminded with the views of essentialist feminists, contends that women are innately peace-loving in nature, thus their peacebuilding ability. In concurrence, Potter (2004:4) affirms that women have always been affiliated with reconciliation and peacebuilding and as a result have the inherent ability to influence peace.

These assertions rationalizing for women in peacebuilding maybe substantiated in that the processes would be inclusive of women, challenge the problem of marginalization and exclusion and take stock of the inequalities constraining women's participation in peacebuilding. However, Weber (2006) posits that not all women possess the instinctive capacity to build peace since women also take up arms in wartimes. These considerations, though profoundly debatable, undoubtedly provide highlights to the inquisitorial on women's roles in peacebuilding. Therefore, a definite point of departure on the women and peacebuilding question for this study would be to adhere to the position of, women's inherent human rights as equal partners in peace and security processes aimed to influence their lives and society's development at large. This is because women's rights cannot be isolated from

the general connotation of human rights as provisioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations (UN) in 1948. Basically, the UN conceives human rights as the foundation for all global (political, economic, social, and security) development goals, thus women's rights.

Further literature speaking to the impact of conflict on women, as well as women's role in conflict and post-conflict also addresses the subject in question. This is because the inception of conflicts owe to an emergency of issues (political, economic, social, religion, ethnic, etc.) that either result into meaningful development or complex challenges. Most importantly, conflict being part and parcel of the socio-political existence of humans and society propagates change, especially in the gender roles of men and women beyond the conflict to the post-conflict phase. A review of Africa's post-colonial history catalogues that the continent has been a hub of the world's most fought conflicts<sup>21</sup>. According to Adedeji (1999:5), between the periods subsequent to the independence of most African states - the 1960s and 1990s, "eighteen countries were confronted with armed revolts, eleven underwent austere political emergencies and nineteen relished more or less various states of invariable political condition". Notably, the weaponry and militarized nature of these conflicts often and immensely alter(ed) the traditional roles of women, forcing them to take up other roles as conflict instigators/combatants, peace activists/agents, and family/community providers and caregivers (Human Security Baseline Assessment 2012; Cohen 2013). In addition, conflicts severely infringe(d) on the human rights of women, as they became targeted victims of sadistic acts of sexual and gender based violence, among other forms of cruelty perpetrated against them (Human Security Baseline Assessment 2012).

### **2.3.1. Women as conflict instigators and combatants**

Stereotypically, the conventional and general views as stated by Goldstein (2001), Coulter et.al (2008:7) and Cohen (2013:383) have always been to present women as peaceful, incapable of perpetrating violence during conflicts or simply playing supportive roles to male

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<sup>21</sup> Post-colonial conflicts included inter-state conflicts, such as between Algiers and Morocco in 1964/1965; and Ethiopia and Eritrea conflict. Also, there were internal conflicts, which continue to be in this contemporary. These conflicts take the form of ethnic, religion, and resource conflicts, secessionist rebellions and Coup d'Etats (Bujra 200).



fighters in conflict. However, the reality on the ground as expounded by these authors speak of a different tale where women likewise partake in conflicts and carry out acts of violence on civilians as well as non-combatants together with their male counterparts. In existing and former conflict societies like Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Uganda, the participation of women as conflict combatants and inciters remain(ed) quite a reality (Coulter et.al 2008:7). For example, Cohen's (2013:384) research on 'Female combatants' in Sierra Leone clearly catalogues accounts of women perpetrating violent and indisputable acts of rape on targets by holding down victims to be gang raped and interleaving substances into their bodies. According to Cohen (2013) therefore, same experience was the case in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, during the genocide, where women also participated and piloted the killings of their victims.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, Specht (2006) relates that in Liberia, violent actions by women combatants during the conflicts spanned gruesome sexual offenses like severing the genitals of their male victims and using guns and other objects to perpetrated vicious acts of rape on fellow women. In effect, Coulter et.al (2008:7) maintain that in their roles as combatants, women possess(ed) the ability to be more aggressive and uncompromising in certain instances than the male combatants. To scholars like Goldstein (2001) and Coulter et.al (2008) these violent actions by women were and are often executed, irrespective of whether their participation is voluntary or not, informed by the reasons for which they were recruited as fighters in the first place, or inspired by the ideology of feminist liberation.

In Liberia, the abduction, killing and raping of children, girls, women, family and community members during conflict, and especially the social burden of the conflicts themselves, often account(ed) for some of the reasons that prompt(ed) women to take up arms in violent retaliation (Specht 2006). In the context of women's roles as inciters of conflict, it has been variously articulated that women, as in the case of Liberia, instigated such using the strong social bearings they had on their husbands, male children, and brothers (Kandakai 2015). For example, during the course of the night and in the privacy of their bedrooms, women's tactical language and subtleness in expressing their grievances of the effects of the conflicts and the

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<sup>22</sup> Also see, Jones A. (2002). Gender and Genocide in Rwanda. *Journal of Genocide Research* 4(1), pp. 65-94. And, Sharlach L. (1999). Gender and Genocide in Rwanda: Women as Agents and Objects of Genocide. *Journal of Genocide Research* 1(3), 387- 399.

roles their husbands should or ought to play, saw them rallying their male children and more men in the community to take up arms and engage in the conflicts. Notably, women also prompted their husbands and male figures in the family with such comments like, 'the other faction is winning the fight, killing our children, strong men and your friends are in battle line while you are sitting here doing nothing.' Likewise, they instigated conflict along tribal lines, an example being in Lofa county, northern Liberia, where ethnic feelings were very strong and tribal lines drawn between the Lormas and the Mandingos (Kandakai 2015). A study by Mohamed (2004:13) reveals that in the Darfur region in Sudan, women were advocates, instigators, and in some instances the cause of inter-group conflicts among their male counterparts. For example, the Razaigat women verbally and by ways of actions, publicly and privately provoked and ridiculed their men for not taking revenge against the Cherubino people, who violently attacked, killed their people and appropriated their cattle (Mohamed 2004:16). Often, such incitements by women sow the seeds of battle in their male counterparts, with the end result being the community mobilization of the male folks to counterattack opposing factions.

In many ways, changes in women's roles or gender disruptions occur during conflicts (Tripp 2015). Therefore, it should be understood that the impact and new strength of women in and out of the battle field contributes to them stepping out of the background to take up active roles as combatants and conflict instigators in the given of the above discourse. As part of the development of the women and peacebuilding discourse, this implies a shifting interpretation behind the *raison d'être* and focus on the involvement and role of women in peacebuilding, which for the purpose of this study is emphasized in terms of strategies to abet and enhance reconstruction and sustainable processes in post-conflict Liberia. Therefore, whilst the reality of women's hard fought conflict roles and experiences is a major indicator in the evolving women-peacebuilding consensus, it also in many ways presents a flipped dimension of longstanding and banal perspectives that equate aggression and violence to men and peacefulness and pacifism to women (Goldstein 2001).



### **2.3.2. Women as caregivers and peacebuilders during conflict and in post- conflict**

Departing from women's roles as combatants and instigators of conflict, El-Bushra (2007), Alaga (2011), True (2013), and Tripp (2015) argue that women also take up the diverse roles of caregivers and peace activists during as well as in the aftermath of conflict. Not only do women act as each other's' keeper in terms of nursing to health the injured, especially their husbands, brothers and children, they also take charge of maintaining and ensuring the provision of basic necessities for their families and communities (Shulika 2016:17). Meanwhile, the shouldering of these responsibilities by women significantly owes to the mobilizing effects of the political economy and gender disruptive roles of conflicts (Meintjes 2002; Tripp 2015), wherein most men are either out of formal jobs or caught up fighting in the battle fields. According to Goldstein (2001) the undertaking of these roles by women registers well with the views of feminist peace activists and traditionalists who believe in the general peacefulness and caregiving nature of women as opposed to men, especially during conflicts. Thus, confronted with this role change, women have developed the abilities to endure with resilience the sufferings of conflicts and to obligate themselves to make decisions that shape their households, communities and political environments (El-Bushra 2007:135). These responsibility shifts, as asserted in this study, equally accounts for women's resolve to empower themselves to proactively wage peace during conflicts and advocate for their rights to participate in decision-making as equal partners to the processes of peace, especially in post-conflict situations.

The normative view in terms of women activism and struggle for peace during conflict most often owe to their weariness of having to live and deal with the gruesome impacts and consequences of conflicts. Reflecting on some of such conflicts effects, literature points (Rehn and Sirleaf 2002, El-Bushra 2007) underline that the misdemeanours of sexual viciousness on women and girls as a weapon of war and its resultant physical and psychological trauma often constitute the most severe ramifications of conflicts and a major threat to the already deteriorated security environments. Cross-cutting the disturbing experiences of conflict, Mckay and Mazurana (2001:10) contend that while the entire society suffers the vices, the repercussions on women and children are disparate and more excessive comparatively to the men folks. Drawing from the works of Mckay and Mazurana (2001), Rehn and Sirleaf (2002),

Mohamed (2004), Alaga (2011), and Ouellet (2013), etc., this explains why in the phase of conflict victimization and its catastrophes, women work their way into taking more active peace roles with especially women-cum-organizational initiatives and groups. In this regards, Shulika (2016:17) asserts that women's ultimate desire for a return of peace and security normalcy underpins their emergence and growth as women organizations empowering actions for peace and societal security, and challenging the undermining of their rights.

Following from the above, a surge of studies and scholarship (Tripp 2015, Ouellet 2013, McCarthy 2011, Alaga 2011, Massaquoi 2007, Rehn and Sirleaf 2002) reviews of Liberia's background underscore the development of women with expectation, determination, agency and sustained prominence to ensure the reign of peace in Liberia. Viewed as a critical force for the movement of peace, Hunt and Posa (2001: 38) maintain that women through their activism and abilities to bridge divides often command and are the voices of reasonableness during conflicts. The dominant debate hereis that most women proactively involve in the structural prevention of conflict and support the consolidation of peace through their mechanism of non-violence activism and interventionist roles (Anderlini 2000; Conaway and Sen 2005; Miller, Pournik and Swaine 2014; Zubashvili 2015). For example, the Liberian experience succinctly appraised in the first chapter and expatiated in chapter five evinces the proliferation and activism of women and women's organizations, as well as their instrumentality in exerting influence as mediators, peace agents, and architects during Liberia's conflict eras and in the post-conflict. Alluding to the instance of Sudan's protracted conflict history, the Sudanese Women's Voice for Peace constantly convened with armies of warring factions and their leaders to impel them to negotiate peace and ceasefire deals (Hunt and Posa 2001:42). Generally, women rising and activism for peace during conflicts seems to be a common practice, considering the semblance of developments and experiences in conflict and post-conflict societies (like: Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, Mozambique, Mali, South Africa, Sierra Leone, Angola, Central African Republic etc.) across the African continent.

As with the fore-reviewed literature on women's roles during conflicts, scholarship on their unique roles in the transitional trajectory to sustainable processes after the wars have ended is quite robust. In the matter of post-conflict therefore, the transition is also evident in the

interference of traditional gender roles and relations, wherein women not only become more empowered, but pressure for the recognition of their human and civil rights to representation, decision-making, leadership, and governance processes (Lukatela 2012; Tripp 2012). In the context of the Liberian case study, there have been visible gains by women in the said processes following the end of the conflict in 2003. Some noted exemplars include the democratic election of a female head of state; the appointment of women to political positions of leadership; the passing of gender equality bills; reserving quotas for women in parliament (though their representation has been generally low); and the establishment of National Action Plan on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women, peace, and security (Massaquoi 2007; Tripp 2015). In addition, the authority of the Ministry of Gender and Development (2009) is significantly broadened to address issues of gender inequality and implement programmes like the National Gender Policy (NGP), which among others aim to ensure the integration of women's perspectives into the country's adopted framework for national development. In consolidating post-war gains, women's demand for recognition and participation in Liberia has also seen the reform of legislative and constitutional processes, such as laws giving women land and inheritance rights as well as rape law punishing the acts of sexual and gender-based violence; the establishment of programmes and projects to empower women and girls (USAID 2007; Government of Liberia 2014), among others. The Literature on women and peacebuilding in Liberia generally uncovers that there have been and continue to be a remarkable progression in the recognition, inclusion and representation of women in Liberia's post-conflict processes. For example, studies by Bekoe and Parajon (2007), Valasek (2008), Bastick (2008), de Carvalho and Schia (2009), McCarthy (2011), and Bastick and Whitman (2013), recollect on the inclusion, participation and empowerment of women in Liberia's post-conflict security sector reform agenda. Atuobi (2010) International Crisis Group (2011), Luppino and Webbe (2011), Landgren (2014), Government of Liberia (2014), and Nyei (2014), likewise discuss similar enablement of Liberian women in governance processes. While, Long (2008) Cibelli, Hoover and Krüger (2009), Pillay (2009), and Tripp (2015), equally outline the inclusion, representation and empowerment of women in the processes of justice and reconciliation and socio-economic wellbeing in post-conflict Liberia.

Albeit the framework of this literature, the politicking for peace, the brunt of conflict experienced by women, and their role as peacebuilders, other studies (Pankhurst and Anderlini 1998; Alaga 2010; McKay 2004; Miller *et.al* 2014; Zubashvili 2015) note that women still and often remain sidelined and excluded from the negotiating tables and high level decision-making processes for peacebuilding. Therefore, while the overarching purpose of peacebuilding is to consolidate peace and ensure its sustainability, Schnabel and Born (2011), Alaga (2010) and Pankhurst (2003) argue that women remain largely under-represented particularly in the measure of security agendas, which among others include disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR). In appraising the role of women in post-conflict Liberia, McCarthy (2011) and Tripp (2015) draw attention to the non-consideration of women's counsel and their marginalization, especially in the country's first post-war dispensation. In the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, Schnabel and Born (2011) observe that women remain prime victims of sexual and gender-based abuses perpetrated by some personnel of the security service as well as members and citizens of the social order. Generally, conflict and peace literature indicate that these complexities are not peculiar to conflict and post-conflict societies in Africa but across the globe. In practical terms, this barrier that characterizes security sector processes has a negative impact on responsiveness to the security roles as well as needs and interests of women and wanes the imperative of inclusivity and local ownership of the reform processes (Bastick 2008; El-Bushra 2012). Alam, Larsen, Nichols and Windsor (2013), further highlight impediments in the implementation of justice and reconciliation agendas, in which the prerequisite for greater women involvement, planning and management of the processes is frequently overlooked. And, most common in such a situation is the fact that crimes against humanity, including sexual and gender-based violence remain ineffectively addressed by the justice systems. Likewise, Alam *et.al* (2013) maintain that women's interests, socio-economic and political empowerment are often not accorded the priority due in the implementation of post-conflict processes.

Summing from the above discourse, this study asserts that the challenges and exclusionary practices against women unquestionably infringe on their rights to equal participation in decision-making processes. Noting that women remain relevant and vital to peacebuilding

processes, the study espouses Potter's (2004) argument that women's meaningful involvement is essential to the practicable realization of peacebuilding, given the central goal of process and development sustainability. More so, engaging the processes of peacebuilding entails active civilian dimensions and ownership of the reconstruction processes by the civil society at large (Potter 2004), and women are customarily the majority population in both conflict and post-conflict societies. Apparently, these contentions coupled with the growing realization of the predicaments of women have enormously prodded the internationalization and institutionalization of policies advocating for their recognition and active participation in decision-making structures of leadership, peace and security. So, literature in light of established international laws and conventions on the subject builds on the prerogatives and rights of women to be equal stakeholders in conflict management processes and especially post-conflict development.

#### **2.4. International policy context on women and peacebuilding**

Literature on the internationalization of the women and peacebuilding subject expounds the development of policy frameworks that advocate for women's recognition, inclusion and equal participation in decision-making processes. It builds on the assertion that the imperative of women's active presence in the realization of peace and security, and their instrumentality in bridging the gender gap in contemporary transitional agenda cannot be overstated. This is the reason why at the conception and establishment of the United Nations in 1945, the quest and groundwork for equal gender standing in leadership and decision-making structures of society saw the UN making conscious recommendations for equal human rights for women and men in its Charter of commitment (UN Women 2000). This dynamic declaration of human egalitarianism in rights and dignity in the international arena echoed the message that set the tune for the current discourses on the recognition of women's rights as human rights and access to equal opportunities in all spheres of society. Despite this affirmation and the contention that women had for centuries been visibly active in undertaking various roles in society, it was not until the 1970s that the introduction of 'women's issues as global issues' attracted widespread international attentiveness (Reardon 1993). Accordingly, this global consciousness instigated the declaration of the International Women's Year in 1975, and the

United Nations International Decade for Women (UNDW) from 1976–1985. Further elucidations by Reardon (1993) reckon that:

The events of the 1970s signified an epoch in history where women became increasingly cognizant of the supportive roles they play(ed) in the war systems, the devastating impacts wars had and continue to have on humanity, particularly on women and girls. Most importantly, it symbolized an era where women became consciously aware of their potential to contribute to world peace by influencing policy and decision-making agencies on peace and security. Therefore, the UNDW was propelled by women's vision for their struggle for peace and human dignity and was marked by three international conferences held in Mexico City in Mexico 1975, Copenhagen in Denmark 1980, and Nairobi in Kenya 1985. The Mexico conference adopted a World Plan of Action that called for the 'full participation of women in all efforts to promote and maintain peace'. The after-action sequel of this conference was the adoption of the legally binding Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 - labelled as the 'Bill of Rights for Women'. The Copenhagen conference on Equality, Development and Peace concluded on the objectives of the UNDW; and the Nairobi conference which is said to have ignited the commencement of 'Global Feminism', reviewed and evaluated the achievements of UNDW and by agreement, adopted sets of principles - 'The Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women' for the emancipation of women as a point of departure for a peaceful society.

Beyond the 1970s, women's role in peacebuilding has gained increased legitimacy through popular activism, instrumental right-based frameworks and relevant scholarships. This entrance into the international public arena is confirmed through the evidence that the last three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and most notably the present 21<sup>st</sup> century have been heightened with efforts to harmonize women's participation in peace and security agendas.<sup>23</sup> Significant developments in this fashion have included policy blueprints like the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995; the Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace in Africa of 1999; The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa of 2003; and most distinctly the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 of 2000, 1820 of 2008, 1888 and 1889 of 2009, and 1960 of 2010, just to mention a few. These instruments are concerned with Women, Peace and Security;

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<sup>23</sup> See studies by (Reardon 1993; Pankhurst and Anderlini 1998; Rehn and Sirleaf 2002; Schirch and Sewak 2005; Massaquoi 2007; Alaga 2011; etc).



Women's leadership in peace-making and conflict prevention; and the Prevention of and response to conflict-linked sexual violence, especially against women. Notably, these policy proceedings are human rights instruments that draw expansively from the International Bill of Rights, which encompasses the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, both endorsed in 1966 and officially made binding and applicable in 1976.

#### **2.4.1. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)**

The BPfA was adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. At the heart of this policy is women's empowerment, participation in decision-making processes, and above all the establishment and endorsement of the rights of women and girls as human rights. In view of this recognition, the BPfA, therefore, identified twelve important areas of focus and concern for distinctive consideration by governments and civil societies in their everyday engagements. Among these are: eradication of poverty, a challenge that confronted women more than men; making both formal and skills education accessible to women and girls; the improvement, provision, availability and accessibility of quality, yet affordable health services to women and girls; the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and the respect and promotion of their human and economic rights; the recognition, involvement and contribution of women in decision-making structures of conflict resolution and peace; and the provision of the platform for women's equal participation in political and leadership processes (Beijing Declaration 1995). Besides this, the Beijing conference also set a target of 30 percent of women in parliaments by 2005. The substance of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is that it embodies the plan for women's empowerment and development that has set the space for this contemporary epoch, and reiterates the universality of women's rights as human rights (UN Women 2000).

#### **2.4.2. The UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS)**

This blueprint in sequence underscores the centrality of gender mainstreaming and women's practical role in sustaining peace and security in all the phases and ambits of peacebuilding. This landmark resolution developed owing to the realization of the

negative implications of armed conflicts on women and children, and the consciousness of women's ability to negotiate, contribute and influence processes aimed to bring about and sustain peace (United Nations 2010). The UNSCR 1325 is the most widely acclaimed policy that has so far changed the manner in which the international community perceives peace and security and the role of women therein. Central to its provisions is the support for women's rightful participation in the resolution of conflicts and in the negotiation and consolidation of peace; their active involvement, presence and contribution at all levels of the decision-making structure of peace and security; and the exigence for conflict parties, government, institutions and civil societies to respond to and address the needs of women in the efforts of post-conflict justice and governance, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (UNSCR 2000). This resolution also underlines the need and importance to safeguard women and girls from all forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and emphasizes the imposition of due judgements on conflict parties for crimes against humanity encroaching women (UNSCR 2000). Generally speaking, UNSCR 1325 is distinguished as the *modus operandi* that provides the framework for managing the issues of gender equality during and in the aftermath of conflict, especially that which pertains to women (Rehn & Sirleaf 2002). It particularly signalled the commencement of our contemporary and widely affirmed international perspective and importance of the role of women in peace and security interventions, thus establishing a change in the chapter of policy processes.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The policy processes in this given refer to efforts to enhance the implementation and expand the agenda on WPS and the adoption of additional resolutions that further underscore the importance of gender (particularly women) in the management of international peace and security governance. These policies with - strategic themes and provisions include: -"UNSCR 1820 (2008) - Protection of women from sexualised violence in conflict; zero tolerance of sexualised abuse and exploitation perpetrated by UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) personnel. - UNSCR 1888 (2009) - Creation of office of special representative of the secretary general on sexual violence in conflict (SRSG-SVC); creation of UN Action; identification of "team of experts"; appointment of women's protection advisors (WPAs) to field missions. - UNSCR 1889 (2009) - Need to increase participation of women in peace and security governance at all levels; creation of global indicators to map implementation of UNSCR 1325. - UNSCR 1960 (2010) - Development of conflict-related sexualised violence (CRSV) monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements; integration of WPAs into field missions alongside gender advisors. - UNSCR 2106 (2013) - Challenging impunity regarding and lack of accountability



### **2.4.3. Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa**

Adopted by the African Union in 2003 and enforced in 2005, this protocol serves as the key etiquette with elaborate provisions to protect and promote the rights of women and girls in Africa (Equity Now 2011: 1). Central to the protocol is its delineation of discrimination against women and the safeguarding of their rights in all international Bill of Rights proceedings. The protocol resolutely champions for the recognition and respect of women's rights to dignity, life, peace, integrity and security; education and training; economic and social welfare; protection from armed conflicts; participation in the political and decision-making processes; and rights to sustainable development (The Protocol 2003), just to mention a few. In particular, Article 10(2) (b) of this Protocol sanctions for states to put in place all measures necessary for strengthening women's participation in the areas of conflict prevention, management and resolution at all levels, from the local to the international. The Protocol basically dictates for its ratification and implementation by all African States and assigns the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights to take charge of interpreting and clarifying issues arising from the implementation of the Protocol. To translate and buttress their commitment to this Protocol, African Union Heads of State and Governments, within the expansive context of responsibility also adopted the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) and the Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy in 2006 (see: African Union Gender Policy, Part 1(iv) 2009).

Translating from the above policy contexts and provisions, there is no gainsaying that their essence is the purposeful acknowledgement and recognition of women's rights as human rights before the articulation of their importance in influencing decision-making processes. As such, the policies depict they are watershed instruments that transmit the relevance of women's concrete contribution, representation and recognition in peace processes at all times, irrespective of the status quo. In this regard, the constitutions of some forty-nine African states currently have provisions that dictate "equality; non-discrimination; rights of women"

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for CRSV. - UNSCR /2122 (2013) - UN Women identified as key UN entity providing information and advice on participation of women in peace and security governance; whole-of-UN accountability; civil society inclusion; 2015 High-Level Review of implementation of UNSCR 1325"(Shepherd 2014: 1).

(Huckerby 2013); among others.<sup>25</sup> The table below is indicative of the independent African countries with such provisional pronouncements.

**Table 2.1: Gender Equality and Provisions in Constitutions of Africa by Countries**

1. Angola	26. Madagascar
2. Benin	27. Malawi
3. Botswana	28. Mali
4. Burkina Faso	29. Mauritania
5. Burundi	30. Mozambique
6. Cameroon	31. Namibia
7. Cape Verde	32. Niger
8. Central African Republic	33. Nigeria
9. Chad	34. Rwanda
10. Comoros	35. São Tomé and Príncipe
11. Republic of the Congo	36. Senegal
12. Democratic Republic of the Congo	37. Seychelles
13. Cote d'Ivoire	38. Sierra Leone
14. Djibouti	39. Somalia
15. Equatorial Guinea	40. Somaliland
16. Eritrea	41. South Africa
17. Ethiopia	42. South Sudan
18. Gabon	43. Sudan
19. Gambia	44. Swaziland
20. Ghana	45. Tanzania
21. Guinea	46. Togo
22. Guinea-Bissau	47. Uganda
23. Kenya	48. Zambia

<sup>25</sup> These other provisions include “public authorities, institutions & services; political participation & freedom of association; citizenship/nationality, right to property/inheritance; reproductive rights; education; employment; equality before the law; marriage & family life; status of religious/customary law; status of international law (including human rights law); limitations and/or derogations; general human rights guarantees; and human rights duties” (Huckerby 2013)

24. Lesotho	49. Zimbabwe
25. Liberia	

**Source:** Huckerby J. (2013). Gender Equality and Constitutions of Africa. Document prepared for UN Women. Available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2013/2/Africa-Constitutions%20pdf>

While these constitutional provisions are generally grouped under the specifications of gender equality, they all carry provisional guidelines that mention or speak to the women’s rights. Another point to reckon with is, before the adoption and enforcement of these policy frameworks, the participation of women in public decision-making processes was comparatively microscopic. Paxton, Hughes and Painter (2009) generally maintain that the under-representation of women in national political affairs remains remarkably high. This is despite the different international policy developments and efforts by societies to enhance women’s equal recognition, participation and representation in development and public decision-making processes and positions. In addition to this, records from the Inter-Parliamentary Union statistics base indicate that the constitution of women in national parliaments (Single House of Lower House, and Upper House or Senate) worldwide in 1995 stood at a mere 11.3%. This was downright way below the BPfA recommended mass of 30% of women representation and indicative of the disparity between women and men in the domain of politics and public leadership. However, with the policy developments and passage of time, there has been a global and gradual upsurge over the past twenty years (1995 to 2015) with women accounting for 13.1% in 2000, 16.3% in 2005, 19.1% in 2010 and 22.7% in both parliamentary houses as of December 2015 (Inter-parliamentary Union 2015). This increase is also evident in the regional average representation of women in national parliaments as indicated in the combined statistical table of 2000/2015 that follows.

**Table 2.2: Regional Representation of Women in Parliament 2000/2015**

Regions	Single or lower House		Upper House or Senate		Both Houses combined	
	2000	2015	2000	2015	2000	2015
Nordic Countries	38.8%	41.1%	-	-	38.0%	-
Americas	15.2%	27.0%	16.6%	25.7%	15.9%	26.8%

Europe - OSCE member countries (including Nordic countries)	16.5%	25.7%	13.8%	24.2%	16.0%	25.4%
Europe - OSCE member countries (excluding Nordic countries)	14.2%	24.2%	13.8%	24.2%	14.1%	24.2%
Sub-Saharan Africa		23.3%		22.0%	14.8%	23.1%
Asia	15.0%	19.3%	15.5%	16.2%	15.0%	19.0%
Arab States	3.8%	19.1%	2.7%	11.9%	3.6%	17.9%
Pacific	12.0%	13.4%	25.6%	36.0%	13.6%	15.9%

**Source:** Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2000/2015. Women in National Parliament. Available at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

That the past fifteen years (2000 to 2015) since UNSCR 1325, has seen a significant rise in the percentage of women in parliament is indisputable. While the Nordic countries as per the above table shows a high level (41.1%) of women representation in the lower houses, the generic conundrum of under-representation remains apparent, and is not specific to the African region alone, but all the regions in the world. Focusing on the African continent, records also exhibit some levels of improvement in women's representation in parliament with Rwanda achieving the BPfA 30% quota and above at an uppermost total of women parliamentarians continentally and universally in its lower house, as indicated below. The table also captures countries with low levels of female representations in parliament.

**Table 2.3: Proportion of Seats held by Women in Single or Lower Houses in National Parliaments (Revised – Africa in Focus)**

Country name	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Algeria	8	32	32	32	32
Angola	38	34	34	37	37

Benin	8	8	8	8	7
Botswana	8	8	8	10	10
Burkina Faso	15	16	16	19	13
<b>Burundi</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Cameroon</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>
Central African Republic	13	13	-	-	-
Chad	13	15	15	15	15
Comoros	3	3	3	3	3
Congo, Dem. Rep.	-	9	9	11	9
Congo, Rep.	7	7	7	7	7
Cote d'Ivoire	11	10	10	9	9
Djibouti	14	14	13	13	13
Egypt, Arab Rep.	2	2	-	-	-
Equatorial Guinea	10	10	12	24	24
Eritrea	22	22	22	22	22
Ethiopia	28	28	28	28	-
Gabon	14	16	16	15	14
Gambia	8	8	8	9	9
Ghana	8	-	11	11	11
Guinea	-	-	-	22	22
Guinea-Bissau	10	14	14	14	14
Kenya	10	10	19	19	20
Lesotho	24	27	27	27	25
Liberia	10	11	11	11	11
Libya		17	17	16	16
Madagascar	13	18	18	21	21
Malawi	22	22	22	17	17
Mali	10	10	10	10	9
Mauritania	22	22	22	25	25
Mauritius	19	19	19	19	12

Morocco	17	17	17	17	17
<b>Mozambique</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>39</b>	-	<b>40</b>
Namibia	24	24	24	-	41
Niger	13	13	13	13	13
Nigeria	7	7	7	7	6
<b>Rwanda</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>64</b>
Sao Tome and Principe	18	18	18	18	18
<b>Senegal</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Seychelles</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>44</b>
Sierra Leone	13	12	12	12	12
Somalia	7	14	14	14	14
<b>South Africa</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>42</b>
South Sudan	27	27	27	27	27
<b>Sudan</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>31</b>
Swaziland	14	14	6	6	6
<b>Tanzania</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>36</b>
Togo	11	11	15	18	18
<b>Tunisia</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Uganda</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>35</b>
Zambia	12	12	12	11	13
<b>Zimbabwe</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>31</b>

**Source:** The World Bank Group (2016). Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments (%). Available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SG.GEN.PARL.ZS? page=2>

Reading from the table above, 14 countries (earmarked in bold) as per the 2015 statistics voted 30 and above percent of women in their single and lower houses. As per the mandate of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), each country should be vying for such 30 % and beyond quota to ensure women are universally represented in the structures of political leadership. The component of women's political participation is very vital for the strengthening of women's empowerment, human and civil rights in society, as well as their roles as peacebuilders (Castillejo 2016). However, the majority of the African countries are still

(though making gradual progress) lagging behind with the implication that men continue to hold primary percentages in decision-making processes and positions of leadership. Taking Liberia for example, the number of women in national parliament as indicated in Table 2.3 from 2011 to 2015, has not really improved over the timeframe of different years. This is below the 30% quota, and indicative of the fact that much still needs to be done to make political participation and leadership of the state more inclusive of women. As such, the question of implementation and domestication of the fore-discussed blueprints by member states that have so ratified them remains a challenge for many states, especially in Africa.

In deliberating the matter of policy challenges, Rehn and Sirleaf (2002) uphold that the question of implementation and domestication of policy blueprints by member states is a continuous challenge for many African states. In areas where states have implemented the policies, the charge of translating them into viable projects also remains a major challenge. Research by Butler, Mader and Kean (2010: 22) indicate that from 1990 to 2010, only eight percent of women were involved in the facilitation of peace processes worldwide. These challenges are aside from the conventional perceptions of patriarchy and other specificities that place men at the higher echelons of the society as resilient and able leaders compared to women. This is further compounded by society's obliviousness and indifference to the fact that women like men and every other citizen of the world possess equal rights that should be valued and reinforced. More to the point, Castillejo (2016) contends that marginalizing women in decision-making, especially in the post-conflict contexts not only discriminates against their socio-political, economic and human security rights to equal participation, but also their penchant to contribute to peacebuilding outcomes. A critical exploration of the Liberian case study shows that these challenges, as expounded in chapter seven, are existent despite women's notable role in bringing about peace in Liberia and the fact of having a female head of state. Assessing these obvious complexities, therefore, the question of the agency for recognition, respect for women's human and civil rights, inclusion and participation as standalone provisions continue to loom.

It is important to note that the instruments discussed above and the outcomes thereafter are soft policy efforts to address the limitations in gendered development by emphasizing the centrality of women's rights in decision-making governance, peace and development agendas.

However, the challenges between implementation and practice as already indicated, constitutes a paucity in literature yet to be addressed. This limitation, the study argues is because of the ascription of generic policies and gender equality agendas amongst women in international treaties and platforms on their roles as peacebuilders. Tønnessen and Kjølsvedt (2010: 1) also note this looming gap in scholarly works on women and peacebuilding research. Likewise, they reiterate the dearth of literature on how this broad view has resulted in the conviction that the recognition and inclusion of women in public decision-making structures are tantamount to the representation and improvement of women's conditions at all levels of the society (Tønnessen and Kjølsvedt 2010: 38). In efforts to bridge this gap, this study drawing from field engagements in Liberia establishes in the chapters that follow that women's experiences of conflict are as varied as post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development processes. In this regards, the study avers that as diverse as women's experiences of conflict are and the strategies for post-conflict agendas, so too should it be with the policies underpinning women's peacebuilding roles.

While reflecting the above, the study, irrespective of the barriers, acknowledges the proliferation of women's organizations and their roles in peacebuilding, especially in post-conflict settings in Africa. The chapter also draws attention to significant changes in the status of women as they progressively embrace and actively assume responsibilities in formal politics, leadership and decision-making structures subsequent to the overtures of policy developments. This realization as presented in this study owes to the meaningful lobbying and advocacy by women and women's organizations for the approval and effective enforcement of the established policy instruments. Likewise, it can be attributed to their agency to mobilize for increase equality, inclusiveness, transparency and sustainability of (post-) conflict processes, and to empower and support women's candidacy for leadership positions (UNIFEM 2005:1-2). This brings us to the insight of the importance of women's organizations as vocal advocates and viable resources necessary for the establishment and sustenance of society's peace and functionality. So the literature on women's organizations and peacebuilding in (post-)conflict builds on their roles in enhancing the transition of conflict situations to that of peace, as well as strengthening the mandate for democratic and peace consolidation.



## **2.5. Women's organizations in peacebuilding**

The greater operationalization of women's peacebuilding roles is, and continues to be realized under the auspices of civil society organizations (CSOs). According to Ekiyor (2008: 27) CSOs operating as NGOs, women organizations and groups that make up such, have over the last twenty years and more developed as influential driving forces in peace and security discourses across the globe. Kaldor (2003) conceives CSOs as a platform that brings together social actors to discuss and strategize about public affairs non-violently. Cohen (2006: 11) on the other hand delineates CSOs to mean all interest groups (women groups/organizations, faith-based organizations, think tanks, among others) mediating between the state and citizens. While Toure (2010) maintains that CSOs are critical in the support and promotion of efforts towards and for democratization, as well as managing processes aimed at national reconciliation and peacebuilding. In this grouping of CSOs therefore, women organizations as non-profit and self-governing entities often undertake as their goal the advancement of women's rights and lives by engaging mechanisms to address women and society's concerns (Tinker 2010). Having advanced during the dawn of democracy and multipartism in the early 1980s following, women's organizations have since then continued to press for the inclusion of quotas as a means of buttressing women's equal representation and participation in politics (Bauer and Britton 2006).

The BPfA emphasizes the necessity for value-added dialogue and interchange between women's organizations, national machineries, and subsidiary state decision-making organs as vital to the promotion of gender mainstreaming and equality of women in all societal spheres and development processes (UN Women 2014). This is important considering that women's organizations from pre- to post-conflict dispensations serve as platforms for women activism and a foundation for advancing their participation in all areas of decision-making for the purposes of long-term peace (Ernest 1997; McKay and Mazurana 2001; Ekiyor 2008). In this manner, not only are women's organizations perceived as adept exponents of the protection and wellbeing of women and children, the rights and empowerment of women, and the inclusion of women in peace and leadership processes, but also their voices of struggle greatly influence the development of policy blueprints (Toure 2002), as noted in section 2.4

above. Thus, their peacebuilding efforts are often conducted through what John Paul Lederach (1997) and Rupesinghe (1994, 1995) describe as the bottom-up approach<sup>26</sup>. Most importantly, women's goals, practical and strategic are appropriately defined as a collective effort in the framework of women organizations at all levels of the society (Molyneux, 1985 and 1998). Given the goals-orientation, women are ideally propelled to engage long-term development processes (anti-poverty and socio-economic empowerment, welfare, equity, and human rights strategies) to ensure the effective realization of their development needs (Massaquoi 2007). However, for these to be achieved, women's rights must be institutionalized into the processes from the very beginning, with access to government and decision-making platforms.

Notably, various African Women's Peace Initiatives have made relevant documentations on the underlying role of women's sustained advocacy, capacity building and community mobilization for reconciliation, justice and peace programmes under the axis of women organizations in Africa (Ernest 1997: 6). Specific to post-conflict Sierra Leone, Dyfan (2003) highlights the roles played by Women's Movement for Peace and the Women's Forum; these organizations mobilized resources and engaged in skills training programmes to support greater women's participation in public decision-making and post-conflict peacebuilding

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<sup>26</sup> According to Haider (2007:7), this approach by women's organizations is quite inclusive in that it is people-centered and participatory, and is efficient method for conflict resolution within societies. To Lederach (1997), it provides the people with a sense of ownership of the course and processes for which they advocate and creates the platform for programmes that are all-inclusive and take counts of the voices and agencies of the ordinary grassroots people and leaders. These group of people and leaders constitute women's organizations, among others, and are 'particularly relevant after civil wars in deeply divided societies' (Gizelis 2013:3). Through the bottom-up approach, communities (women's organizations) stand a better chance of addressing some of the underlying structural challenges that have deprived them of their human and civil rights, as well as practical and strategic interests (Molyneux and Lazar 2003: 55). It aims to empower them to take charge of managing situations of (post-) conflict by transforming and reconciling their communities and averting conflict recurrence (Lederach 1997). The United Nations as does Lederach (1997) acknowledges that women form the majority population of grassroots communities and the wider civil society. They further maintain that women's involvement as grassroots peacebuilders by a considerable margin facilitates the realization of peace efforts and influences transformation through empowerment and participatory development. According to McCarthy (2011: 121), the resourcefulness of grassroots women as proactive architects of peace during and in the aftermath of conflicts often speak to their positions as stakeholders in the situation, and underscores their self-empowerment through bottom-up development as women's initiatives or organizations (Krook and True 2010: 116). To this effect, bottom-up approach to peacebuilding is pivotal to the processes of peace consolidation and implementation and is prone to further influence developments and outcomes at the middle and top levels of society (Aliyev 2010: 327 & 330).

processes. In post-genocide Rwanda, Mutamba and Izabiliza (2005) bring to the fore the commended peacebuilding roles of Rwandan women in leadership positions and organizations like Unity Club, Forum of Rwandan Women Parliamentarians, and Pro-Femmes TweseHamwe. Through these networks, women masterminded reconciliation and confidence building projects, and empowerment initiatives that also enlisted grassroots women to partake in decision-making (Mutamba and Izabiliza 2005). Noteworthy in the Rwandan case is that women's involvement has secured them government support and an overwhelming 63.8 percent at the lower house and 38.5 at the upper house of parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2015). While governments' support for women's organizations in Sierra Leone and Rwanda is important in every way possible, Tripp (2015) highlights that the works and efforts of women's organizations in war-torn countries and those transitioning from it, have been and are often privy to various forms of assistance from international development organizations.

In the case of post-conflict Liberia, the role of women in peacebuilding is progressively marked by their increased activism, as both stakeholders and contributors of peace and development under various women-led organizations.<sup>27</sup> These organizations are continually influencing the country's peacebuilding processes through activism and advocacy; conflict management; strategic involvement in truth and reconciliation; and in peace and security training programmes both at national (urban) and as grassroots levels (PeaceWomen Project 2006; von Gienanth and Jaye 2007). One major achievement of women's organization and activism in Liberia has been the election and re-election of a female Head of State –President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf in 2005 and 2011 respectively. Also, the growing recognition of women's roles through the Nobel Peace Prize Awards to Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, and Leymah Gbowee (coordinator of WIPNET) in 2011 (Herbert 2014: 4), are evident substantiations for their leading peace roles in Liberia. Important to note however, is the fact that the advancement of women's role and success thereof in realizing peacebuilding processes in

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<sup>27</sup> Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL); Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET); National Women's Commission of Liberia (NAWOCAL); Liberian Female Law Enforcement Association (LIFLEA); Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET); Development Education Network -Liberia (DEN-L); and Ganta Concern Women Development Association (Ganta Concern Women), etc.

Liberia, as in any post-conflict society, must hinge on their (women's) access to women and national policy apparatuses, as provisioned in the BDPfA. Studies have pinpointed some of such important accessible platforms to include: the creation of the Ministry of Gender and Development (Toure 2002); the reform and amendment of the rape and customary law on inheritance, and the establishment of a National Gender Policy in Liberia (Ministry of Gender and Development 2009; Government of Liberia 2014); the establishment a Women and Children Protection Section of the Liberian National Police (Bastick and Whitman 2013); Government Land Policy and Land Policy Reform for Women in Liberia (Republic of Liberia Land Commission 2013), just to mention a few. These development outcomes spearheaded by women and women's organizations in Liberia remind that for women to be equal participants in decision-making and for peacebuilding processes to be effectively implemented, women organizations cannot operate in a vacuum, but alongside the state through access to different women's policies and state machineries. Moreover, literature reviews that some of the works of these women's organizations in Liberia are supported by the government as well as international development agencies like the United Nations, the African Union, ECOWAS, etc. This and the fore-mentioned developments are discussed in the contents of chapters five and six of this study.

A deep-seated and corresponding value to the substantial role women's organizations play as vocal advocates for transformation and peace initiatives lies in the relevance of stated post-conflict agendas. Of importance to this study is the need to critically research how and where women's organizations fit into these agendas, and how they translate them into desirable outcomes. This is fundamental in defining women's roles as peacebuilders and will be expanded in subsequent chapters through the Liberian experience. However, a point of contention which often is blurred yet creates a dearth in understanding women's organizing for peace is the tendency of institutions and society to over generalize their organizational roles. This usually occurs irrespective of their operationalizing as individual entities with diverse strategic goals and may emasculate their significance and contributions to post-conflict processes. Aiming to address this, the study draws from Molyneux's (1985) proposition, that women's formation as organizational bodies are built on the pillars of several practical, but most precisely strategic interests and needs. These interests (as theoretically

discussed in the next chapter) stem from women's state of affairs in the socio-economic and political setting of society, as well as their rights to vie for change and transformation of society's gendered nature that breeds inequality (United Nations Development Programme 2001). In this view, Molyneux (1985 and 2001) as does this study, stresses the importance of engaging women's organizations in peace and decision-making processes as movements with diverse strategic objectives rather than a homogeneous entity.

Sequel to the above reviewed scholarly perspectives on women and peacebuilding and the paucities identified in literature, the study endeavours to add appropriate intellectual, theoretical, practical and policy contributions to that which already exists on the subject. It interrogates the role of women under the auspices of women's organizations in the context of Liberia's peacebuilding architecture. Hence the study's goals are to heighten understanding of the diversity of women's peacebuilding roles in the framework of post- conflict recovery agenda, the challenges that confront their efforts in the process, and the effectiveness of their contributions to the process outcomes.

## **2.6. Conclusion**

In order to better understand the subject of women and peacebuilding, this chapter appraised several scholarly works explicit about the changing landscape of women's peacebuilding roles from the conventional to contemporary perspectives. From the discussions, it was discerned that the vital role women play in maintaining family bonds, nurturing household livelihoods, preserving family lives, and perpetuating social harmony within communities transcends cultures, civilizations, historical epochs, political divides, and geographic space. However, the advent and proliferation of civil wars and armed conflicts in Africa have overburdened them with the greater share of protecting and supporting families and unfortunately exposed them to bear a disproportionate amount of the brunt of the vices of the conflicts. On account of this consciousness of conflicts' burdens, vying for the place of women in society and decision-making processes in the present has become a priority for the international community. This urgency is undergirded by the high level of awareness/consciousness, internationalization, and implementation of a number of policies. The language of these

policies as outlined in the chapter and clearly stated in some of the provisions, provide the rhetoric for women's rights in society's decision-making processes at large.

Moving beyond the language of policies, emanates the necessity for their practical implementation and domestication. The basis of this practice is acknowledged on the primary recognition of women's rights as human rights and the fact that prospects for sustainable peace is significantly contingent on women's practical representation, participation and emancipation. This explains why efforts to return conflict situations to normalcy have seen women rise above its effects and challenges to transform and be involved in decision-making on peacebuilding, reconstruction and development under the canopies of women's organizations. As such, the overall requisite for women's practical involvement in these processes have become more prevalent and a necessary strategy for attaining its objectives. Likewise, their evolving roles nationally and internationally, continue to provide them with the platform to broaden their opportunities and agency as women and women's organizations in peacebuilding.

Generally, the outlook of the comprehensive body of literature reviewed in this chapter presents flipped perspectives of successes and challenges. The challenges hold true in the areas of policy implementation; institutional constraints and the patriarchal nature of society; and the generalizing statements of women's experiences and organizational agendas, regardless of their strategic individuality. These challenges, in turn, speak to the lacuna in scholarship, which prods the study's theorizing in the chapter that follows about peacebuilding, reconstruction and development in the post-conflict, and women's organizations. Theoretically therefore, the next chapter pinpoints the collective need and importance of women's organizations in engaging the pillars of activities in the framework of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development. Singling out the various post-conflict processes, attention is drawn to the fact that women's organizations cannot be viewed as homogeneous because there is a great deal of diversity in their roles. This diversity, as characterized further in the study, is informed by women's different conflict experiences (as caregivers, victims, combatants and peace advocates) and provides the basis for their distinctive organizational objectives and strategies of implementation.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: (POST-) CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING AND WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY

#### 3.1. Introduction

This chapter builds on rife perspectives of identifying critical contextual and substantive elements at the helm of post-conflict development agendas, and the agency of women organizations as dynamic architects in shaping the processes. Reflecting amid the recurrent discourses on women and/in peacebuilding as reviewed in the previous chapter, this chapter opts for the question: how is peace built in post-conflict societies and how do women organizations fit into the equation, as the thematic focus guiding the current study. Following through this inquiry, the chapter advances that an all-inclusive international and national theory of peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development are cogitated frameworks for governing and managing the state of affairs in the aftermath of conflict. However, its success as per the thesis of this research hinges on how practically women and women's interests are integrated into the framework of post-conflict, and how they are adequately represented in the implementation of the processes. Therefore, this chapter builds on a theoretical foundation for the study, while making general and specific inputs to the women and peacebuilding discourse and its applicability to the Liberian case study, with a view to fill-in the gaps in Literature. Hence the chapter's presentation in sections 3.2 and 3.3 each addresses the leitmotifs of the proposed question as they broaden on the theoretical frameworks adopted for this study.

In principal, the context of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development is one among the frameworks of Conflict Transformation that has been popularized in the works and policies of the United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) peace mechanisms. These organizations, having both adopted these 'strategic' frameworks, have also mandated profoundly in their policies (as indicated in the chapter two) the practical inclusion of women in the conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery agendas. As specified in the previous chapter, the framework centres on four distinctive elements of successful peacebuilding or pillars of reconstruction. Establishing such consideration in the context of the complex history

and realities that precedes and follows post-conflict situations, the chapter uses the lens of women organizing for peace to probe how the processes are operationalized. Within this framework of analysis, it adopts Maxine Molyneux's<sup>28</sup> (1985 and 1998) organizational theory. This theory focuses on women's practical interests and its transformation into strategic interests as underpinning their sense of agency and operative organizational purpose for active involvement in post-conflict developments. These frameworks as discussed in this chapter are construed to relate to the objectives of the study as they originate from the research questions and the propositions on which the research is premised.

Both theories (post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development, and Maxine Molyneux's organizational theory) are of relevance to this study as they bring into line women's role in the agendas of post-conflict. In discussing the later theory, the chapter operationalizes the concept of peacebuilding, and notes that its processes as contended by True (2013: 1), extend to women the possibilities and platform designed for enhancing their rights to equal participation. Speaking of the issues of rights, both theories support and create the platform for considerations of what constitutes the right-based approach to peacebuilding. This is in the sense that, if post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development framework epitomizes the mechanisms for building peace, especially after the wars have ended, then the modus operandi of implementation must take into consideration the rights of all stakeholders involved. In this frame of reasoning, this study asserts that women are equally stakeholders in their own rights, first as humans and then as citizens of the world, also and often pursuing the course of peace through the build-up of their practical and strategic interests as women organizational structures. The bearing of these contentions as presented in this chapter is the promotion of their voices and equal rights to participation, as well as the concept of women's leadership and development for constructive change in every sphere and at all levels of society.

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<sup>28</sup> Molyneux is a sociologist whose works in the areas of gender and development studies, political sociology, as well as human rights are well cited and recognized. Most popular in her works are research on women's movements (or women's organizations), where she examines and focuses on the question of their relationship with the state and how both influence the other. In this way, she also focuses on gender interests, which comprises safeguarding and ensuring strategies that support women's interests, that is, practical and strategic gender interests.



### 3.2. The framework of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development

The decision to engage in post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development activities, simply means that some degree of meaningful steps has been taken to contain or resolve the conflict situation. The entrance of conflict societies into the status of post-conflict is often followed by the prioritization of peace as a key to security, social, economic and political stability and mobility. With the idea of peacebuilding featuring as the bedrock of post-conflict measures, credit can be accorded to Johan Galtung who first introduced the concept in 1970 (United Nations, 2010). The concept was later reiterated internationally by the then UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's in his *Agenda for Peace* in 1992 to mean "an action to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into conflict" (Boutros-Ghali, 1992:11). This action ropes in conflict prevention efforts, and the processes of peacemaking<sup>29</sup>, peacekeeping<sup>30</sup> and finally peacebuilding as a post-conflict mechanism. Particularized in the *Agenda's* appendage in 1995 is the review that post-conflict peacebuilding likewise engages collaborative ventures that encourage capacity and confidence building, reconciliation, socio-economic development, and societal transformation for the stability and functionality of the society (Boutros-Ghali 1995:15). Therefore, since the reaffirmation of peacebuilding in the international community, the concept has continued to evolve and been variously delineated to also include post-conflict reconstruction and development strategies (United Nations 2009:4). These strategies aim to prevent conflict relapse and bolster national capacities at all levels of the society. Equally, they are grounded on national ownership and specific to the needs of the (post-) conflict society to

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<sup>29</sup> Peacemaking involves a process of negotiating with and getting warring factions through diplomatic means to agree to end hostilities through signing peace agreements and seek for non-violent solutions (United Nations. The UN in Brief: What the UN Does for Peace: Peacemaking. Available at: <http://www.un.org/Overview/uninbrief/peacemaking.shtml>).

<sup>30</sup> Peacekeeping often involves intervention missions, mostly military with civilian components, working to keep warring factions apart in order to prevent any further mutual destruction; contain violence, especially following the deterioration of the conflict into large-scale violence or armed conflict. According to the United Nations, it also involves observing of ceasefires, establishing and policing buffer zones, organizing elections, and observing human rights. (United Nations. The UN in Brief: What the UN Does for Peace: Peacekeeping. Available at: <http://www.un.org/Overview/uninbrief/peacemaking.shtml>)

(re)build their capacity and work effectively together for the attainment of durable peace, and eventually development (United Nations 2010:5).

Taking from other viewpoints, peacebuilding also entails conceptualizing policy-making and implementing strategies that are inclusive and grounded on the equal participation of those whose lives will be influenced by the policies (Reardon 1993:5). According to Lederach (1997) and Dudouet (2006:11) peacebuilding constitutes a dynamic yet complex process of constructive conflict and relationship transformation that embroils promoting equality and social justice, and utilizing the top-down and bottom-up approach to collaborate activities among all actors at all levels. From the positive peace and peace by peaceful means perspectives, Galtung (1996) explicates the concept as taking on key constructive social and political trends like justice, human rights, social reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation, which are vital for the realisation of a long-term peace prospects (Jeong 2005; Atack 2009). What's more, Newman, Paris and Richmond (2009:8) conceive peacebuilding as comprising of measures that aim to strengthen national capacities to avert conflict; engage humanitarian assistance, security and development actions; (re)build institutions of governance and the rule of law; and lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development.

The above constructs of peacebuilding simply speak to its overlapping agendas that likewise include reconstruction and development engagements, as previously noted. A further conceptualization of what peacebuilding encompasses is provided by former United Nations Assistant Secretary General for Peacebuilding Support Office, Judy Cheng-Hopkins (2013), using the acronym SCHELP, which denotes embarking in;

**S =** Security Sector Reform or Transformation programmes. This component of peacebuilding focuses on post-conflict security programmes such as disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation (DDRR) with the aim to avert the relapse of conflict and enhance public security (Cheng-Hopkins 2013). Thus it necessitates engaging,

**C =** Civil Society in the peacebuilding activities. They are the most affected by conflict. This element of peace-building demands for the post-conflict activities to be inclusive and capitalize on projects that foster civil society participation (Cheng-Hopkins 2013). This is in

order to give them a sense of ownership of the peace process, and enable the establishment of truth and reconciliation commissions to facilitate,

**H =** Healing Process in post-conflict. The process of healing is an important element of the peacebuilding, which involves the institution of truth and reconciliation commissions to enhance national reconciliation and psychosocial supports and reparations to heal the trauma of war, divisions of the past, and the memories and relationships destroyed during the conflict (Cheng-Hopkins 2013). Achieving this creates the space for better investment in,

**L =** Livelihood creation and investment. Investing in livelihood involves building and creating a better life for people and ensuring that development reaches the most vulnerable, including women, youth and children (Cheng-Hopkins 2013). Investing in livelihoods thus creates the space to,

**E =** Empower society, especially women, because they often bear the burden of conflict. Empowering society and women, therefore, calls for capacity building and training programmes that seek to train and teach women about organizations, politics and public speaking (among others), as they can uphold many roles in society and bring about positive change, especially in post-conflict (Cheng-Hopkins 2013). Importantly, these peacebuilding components necessitate for governance processes, and

**P =** Public Administration that implements policies and activities necessary for the regimented functioning of the government as an agent of change. This involves (re)building the government/state administration, by broadening state authority beyond the capital city to local and rural areas through the provision of basic and legal services, and security support; and ensuring good, transparent and accountable processes (Cheng-Hopkins 2013).

As a leading approach in contemporary peace researches, the peacebuilding policy and practice have expanded its scope in a very significant way to include the fundamentality of post-conflict reconstruction and development (PCRD) strategies to better achieve its objectives. Various United Nations and African Union documents define PCRD as a multidimensional and integrated strategy for post-conflict peacebuilding security; governance and participation; socio-economic development; and human rights, justice and reconciliation;

as the backbone of these processes (Hamre and Sullivan 2002: 89; NEPAD Secretariat 2005; African Union 2006). Schoeman and Naude (2007:5-7) further highlight that the African Union records on PCRD also envisage and address pertinent issues of gender parity, women empowerment, involvement and active participation in these processes.

While the above spells out what post-conflict processes embody, Filipov (2006:7) argues that they are often limited and fall short of procuring lasting peace. This especially owes to the reality of recurring conflict episodes witnessed by most post-conflict societies. This caveat nonetheless, the study argues that post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development theory is necessary for understanding what takes place after the wars have ended, and how support for the processes of recovery can be developed and maintained. Besides, the comprehensive nature of post-conflict recovery mechanisms are in such that collaborative efforts between the state, stakeholders, and civil society provide the basis upon which the success 'or not' of the processes are contingent (Atuobi 2010:2). Therefore, it becomes imperative to note that in this framework of post-conflict processes, peacebuilding remains a process that can be and is often embarked on both during and in post-conflict situations. Taking that the context of this study underscores and endeavours to locate the importance of women in post-conflict agendas, it intrinsically incorporates the 'women's libber or liberationist' analytical definition of peacebuilding as:

“A gender-aware and women-empowering political, social, economic, and human rights undertaking that involves personal and group accountability and reconciliation processes which contribute to the reduction or prevention of violence; and fosters the ability of women, men, girls, and boys in their own cultures to promote conditions of nonviolence, equality, justice, and human rights of all people, in order to build democratic institutions and sustain the environment” (McKay and De la Rey 2001).

Undertaking the processes of peacebuilding together with those of reconstruction and development have been and continue to be characterized arduous in both past and ensuing discourses on the subject (Miller 2005:58). Mindful of these, commitments to accomplish them (the processes) have seen some initiatives by the United Nations, including the establishment of operative Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and Peace Commission (PBC) to carry on the different activities (Brahimi 2007:18). Likewise, these post-conflict strategies receive the regular backing of the international community and bodies operational

in synergy with local governments, institutions and civil society (Miller 2005:57). In essence, building peace in the post-conflict is a multifaceted task involving several agendas and a diversity of actors. This section focuses on four post-conflict underpinning activities of security; justice and reconciliation; socio-economic well-being; governance and participation, as central to the successful transformation from conflict to peace. These are categorized within the expansive context of efforts to (re)build and (re)construct societies after the wars have ended, with a focus on presenting relevant appraisals of the different modalities of the role of women in peacebuilding as it best applies to Liberia. Thus, this study asserts that because Liberia is a widely noted example of African women building peace, these pillars become relevant towards reviewing the instrumentality of women's involvement in facilitating the consolidation of the post-conflict development agendas.

### **3.2.1. Security (security sector reform/transformation)**

Security in the aftermath of conflict encompasses the concept of security sector reform (SSR), which is increasingly embracing the parlance of transformation, thus security sector transformation (SST) to complement the SSR implementation procedures. While SSR is said to be a broad concept to delineate, it has been conceived to include “the control of belligerents; ensuring territorial security; protecting the populace and key individuals, infrastructure, and institutions; reforming of local security institutions; and negotiating regional security arrangements, as well as establishing strategies for its implementation and monitoring” (AUSA/CSIS Framework 2002:1 & 7). To Brzoska (2000) and Wulf (2000), a broader conceptualization of SSR comprises of four dimensions, namely: the political dimension, which involves democratic and civilian control; the economic dimension that factors in appropriate apportionment of resources; the social dimension, which entails safeguarding the security of citizens; and the institutional dimension that includes professionally equipping the various actors. Bryden and Olonisakin (2010:3 & 8) further project that the central objectives of the security sector are to ensure and deliver operative and effectual state, human security,<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Note is taken that the entire security agenda becomes futile if the ideal of human security is not a prime consideration. This is because, human security emphasizes the primacy of individuals, communities and people's collective security as the reference point of security arrangements, instead of the state security. Such security includes the rights of individuals to live in peace, have access to basic life provisions and the freedom of maximum participation in societal affairs, and be privy to enjoy their fundamental human rights (United Nations

and justice, as corresponding and communally underpropping developments within democratic transition and governance framework. More so, the human component of the security agenda is very important in order to deflect from elite focused interests<sup>32</sup> to an all-inclusive security arrangement that takes into cognizance the protection of the people's rights and security (Bryden and Olonisakin 2010: 12).

According to Cooper and Pugh (2002: 5) undertaking SSR agendas involves the presence of security forces like the military, paramilitary and police; government and parliamentary agencies in charge of overseeing these forces; intelligence and private security corporations; the judiciary and correctional institutions; informal security forces; as well as the civil society. As a precondition for peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development, especially in the post-conflict, SSR is also concerned with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR)<sup>33</sup> of ex-combatants, as well as the protection of the vulnerable population affected by conflict (Tschirgi 2004: 9 & 14). In view of realizing these activities and consolidating peace, the African Union Commission in its Policy Framework on SSR stipulates that the SSR processes must:

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2009: 6). Building on this understanding, safeguarding human security embroils adopting specific measures and engaging programmes that support a 'safe environment, social harmony, equal status, equitable access to resources and to the decision making process' (Gervais 2003: 301). These actions must include strategies that seek to address security issues of concern to women in post-conflict, advances the respect and protection of human rights, and the empowerment of people to take charge of their lives (United Nations 2009:6; Taylor 2003:3 & 4). Human security is a people-centered concept, and it stresses equality and freedom for all, gender justice, sustainability and grassroots participation, and peace initiatives that support the comprehensive agenda of security for all (Bajpai 2000: 11).

<sup>32</sup> This is because, in post-colonial Africa, the establishment of security institutions or set ups were mainly aimed for the protection of the elites and their interests, the government regimes and systems in place, as well as to control, restraint and maneuver the masses and resources. In a large part, this failure to take on a people-centered arrangement to security resulted in weak, fragile, and failed states, and thus the outbreak of most of African conflicts post-colonialism and independence.

<sup>33</sup> The process of disarmament involves the establishment and enforcement of weapons regulatory systems; disarming belligerents and moderating the availability of unlicensed and unauthorized weapons through collaborative and cooperatives efforts; and securing/destroying the weapons, and establishing local arms control authority. \*Demobilization process encompasses the establishment of disbandment camps; the provision of basic and necessary health, food and security for ex-combatants; dispersing such belligerent clusters; as well as monitoring and evaluating the entire demobilization process. \*Reintegration involves bringing back and reintegrating ex-combatants into society; and putting in place strategies, complementary services and support systems for their reintegration both in the economic and social spheres of the society (AUSA/CSIS Framework 2002:5).



“...adhere to the principles of gender equality and women’s empowerment as enshrined in the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003); the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004); the Solemn Declaration on a Common African Defence and Security Policy (2004); the Post Conflict Reconstruction and Development Policy (2006); the African Union Gender Policy (2009); the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 and 1889 (2009); and other relevant gender instruments of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Member States. The entire SSR process will, therefore, include women-specific activities, gender awareness and responsive programming, and aim to bring about transformative possibilities for gender equity within the security sector” (African Union Commission 2013:11).

Discussing transformation of the security sector, Cooper and Pugh (2002:22 & 23) state that it involves emancipating societal organizations and groups devoted to promoting and building peace; providing the platform for communal inclusivity and participation of the local people and civil society in the security sector agendas; and limiting the excessive involvement of external actors. Equally, this language of transformation characterizes the inclusion of women in formal or informal security sector arrangements as an elemental machinery for SST (Bryden and Olonisakin 2010:18). In fact, the security sector agendas provide the basis to determine how peace and security are (re)instated back to the people and society. This bedrock of security arrangements further points to the notion of human security, which to Hudson (2005:162), is understood as a gender process since gender as a unit of analysis in security broadens integration across all societal groups and levels. Viewing security through the primacy of human security therefore entails that women as part of the whole (of people and groups) must be protected, empowered, represented and involved in the security sector reform and transformation engagements. Notably in Africa<sup>34</sup>, the security pillar of post-conflict recovery is vital to the enhancement of peace and development processes, particularly bearing in mind the AU’s adoption of a policy framework to this effect. So in keeping with the study’s subject to understand women’s organizational peacebuilding position in Liberia, this pillar is linked to the broader objective of how women impact the reform and transformation of the security sector in the agenda of post-conflict.

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<sup>34</sup> Reference here can be made to post-conflict African societies like South Africa, Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi (among others), where security sector reform or transformation has been part and parcel of their revitalization processes with evidence of significant strides, and challenges as should be expected in most, if not, all societies transitioning from conflict.



### 3.2.2. Justice and reconciliation

Violent conflicts comprise a major threat to human relations, and its ramifications on individuals, families, communities and societies, often leave them devastated and traumatized. Addressing these ordeals necessitates for the employment of ambitious transitional justice and reconciliation measures. Integrating justice into peacebuilding processes is a requisite for addressing the injustices of war. As such, the nexus between peace and justice, as is reconciliation which is the definitive goal of post-conflict societies, peace and reconstruction agendas (Mobekk 2005:262 - 263), brings to fore the importance of this pillar for the effectiveness of post-conflict strategies. The justice initiatives include restructuration and institution of systematic judicial and/or non-judicial structures to tackle issues of victimization and injustices; and accessibility of judicial and correctional systems of laws that are unbiased; and operational law enforcement services that respect human rights (Flournoy and Pan 2002:112). The use of judicial or formal justice instruments involves prosecuting perpetrators of human rights violations and crimes against humanity in front of international courts and tribunals or local and communal courts of law. Also important in the transitional justice processes is the need to build indigenous capacity to promote and implement the role of law (AUSA/CSIS Framework 2002:3). Moreover, it comprises a trajectory of practices and strategies undertaken by societies to address and heal the legacy of past wounds and abuses, in an attempt to ensure accountability and justice, and reconcile society (United Nations 2004). Rwanda post-genocide<sup>35</sup> dispensation represents a good example of the applicability of post-conflict justice initiatives.

Transitional justice may also take the form of restorative justice, which in the African framework includes traditional approaches and mechanisms for achieving reconciliation. Reconciliation is an indispensable and transformative strategy for peace that provides the platform to redress the past, mend broken relationships, (re)build trust and confidence, and promote peaceful co-existence and social cohesion (AUSA/CSIS Framework 2002: 3;

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<sup>35</sup> Following the end of the Rwandan genocide in 1994, the government established the Gacaca tribunals as a transitional punitive and restorative justice project to help heal the wounds of genocide by promoting reconciliation between the Hutus and Tutsis, penalizing perpetrators of the hideous genocide, and setting those wrongly accused. This tribunal is local, participatory and inclusive, and engages traditional methods of resolving problems (Rettig 2008: 25).

McCarthy 2011:18). Realizing these obligate for the development and institution of national reconciliation projects, such as truth and reconciliation commissions<sup>36</sup>; dialogues, conferences and public outreach programmes; reparations for victims of sexual and extensive human rights violations; psycho-social support to victims of abuse; and individual healing and empowerment programmes (AUSA/CSIS Framework 2002:11; Cheng-Hopkins 2013). Accordingly, reconciliation is a vital element of post-conflict recovery agendas, assuming that in efforts to restore relationships, it also serves as a preventive approach to potential conflicts.

As post-conflict recovery strategies, the transitional justice and reconciliation agendas are quite extensive but interlinked and constitute an intricate programme for (re)building peace, stability and trust in society. However, successful processes require coordinated approaches, as well as the capacity of women to intervene therein. Besides, the African Union Panel of the Wise (2013:15) accentuates that transitional justice policies and processes must be “gender sensitive and pay due attention to the particular harms that women suffer, as they are disproportionately affected in conflicts”. In the same light, the EU’s Policy Framework on support to transitional justice (2015:11) stresses integration and mainstreaming gender dimension in all the phases of transitional justice arrangements, as it promotes the space for women’s access and benefit to the processes. Building on the need for this component to be gender mainstreamed and responsive, the study in its research analyses chapters examines the role Liberian women have played in its realization, as well as the roles of the government and its development partners in ensuring inclusivity and supporting women’s agency and leadership in the process.

### **3.2.3. Socio-economic well-being**

Although socio-economic welfare is one of the four fundamental pillars of peacebuilding, reconstruction and development of society in the post-conflict, it remains a relatively broad

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<sup>36</sup> Examples here include South Africa and Sierra Leone, where in the post-conflict, truth and reconciliation commissions were established to seek and tell the truth about the conflicts and address the injustices of the conflicts (Huyse and Salter 2008). Besides, the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights allude that the right to truth constitutes part of one’s rights to an actual remedy for addressing legal problems relating to human and peoples’ rights and fundamental freedoms.

concept to demystify. However, Hamre and Sullivan (2002:91) clarify that it focuses on “addressing important social and economic needs, like the provision emergency humanitarian relief, reinstating to the population basic services such as health and education, creating platforms for a sustainable economy, and institutionalizing inclusive long-term development programme.” Building on social security, the AUSA/CSIS Framework (2002:12-14) details that it involves:

- i. Preventing and managing refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) situation while providing them with shelter, and reintegration ex-combatants back to society;
- ii. Ensuring food security through emergency aid food supplies, market structures that most importantly promotes the welfares of local markets, and remodelling, promoting and diversifying agricultural systems and development;
- iii. Providing efficient public health by instituting workable water and waste management measures; (re)building medical capacity; and training, developing and implementing sustainable health care education programmes;
- iv. Establishing mechanisms for strengthening education systems by investing in human resources, infrastructure, curriculum development; and
- v. Putting in place workable and adequate pension and social security schemes and structures that are supported by the government.

These processes are underpinned by operational economic security systems, thus the importance of economic development. According to Schwarz (2005:437), several researches have been noted to contend that ensuring and improving economic welfare and development might decrease the possibilities of (re)emergence of violent conflicts. This is reason perceiving that the problem of socio-economic inequalities in most instances constitute a major conflict trigger.<sup>37</sup> As such, the consensus of economic development processes has been recorded to include:

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<sup>37</sup> Most, if not all the civil wars and armed conflicts in the African continent, past and present, are linked to issues of socio-economic inequalities. A few of such examples include Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, etc.

- i. Adopting practicable economic strategies to expedite the processes of economic recovery, and processes to;
- ii. Invest in the (re)building or restoration of physical infrastructural facilities and networks; generate employment opportunities and reduce economic inequality between classes in society;
- iii. (Re)construct the market systems; draft, implement and promote legal and regulatory laws on property rights, business and labour regulatory policies and mechanisms;
- iv. Enable local and international trading environment, ensure private as well as public investments and partnerships, capitalize on natural resource development for economic growth and environmentally friendly strategies to control and avert environmental destruction; and
- v. Develop and enforce regulatory systems for banking and finance (AUSA/CSIS Framework 2002:14-16).

These policy choices and processes are necessary for the protection of fundamental socio-economic rights of the society and its population's advancement and are key to post-conflict transformation for peace. Further description of this post-conflict mechanism's applicability entails guaranteeing women's socio-economic rights<sup>38</sup> and access to development opportunities. This is crucial because violent conflicts often induce an increase in women-headed households that continues even after the wars have ended, but not without notably enormous the economic and social challenges (Kumar 2000:15). While classifying women

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<sup>38</sup>The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is hands-on on provisions that underscore the importance of advancing and giving women equal access to economic and social rights and welfare. Article 3 of this Convention obligates states and Governments to "take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation to ensure the full development and advancement of women", and not to discriminate in securing their equal rights basic social protections like housing, food and education. Similarly, the Beijing +5 in focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment, actions for measures to "promote women's economic independence, equal access to education, water and shelter, health and social services, employment, trade and market opportunities, resources and participation in decision-making and management" (UN Women 2014).

under the most susceptible group of people in society, the AU/NEPAD Post-conflict Reconstruction Policy Framework lays emphasis for their increase participation in post-conflict processes. As per this policy, a focus on women's special needs and aspirations is distinguished to impact on livelihood, health, education and socio-economic development at large (NEPAD Secretariat 2005:12 & 23). The African Union draft PCRDR Policy Framework equally underscores the implementation of social and economic policies that tackle gender inequality. It stresses the need to safeguard women's fundamental socio-economic rights and efforts in all dimensions of the post-conflict peace consolidation (African Union 2006:15 & 19). This, however, has to be synchronized with the reform governance and public administration systems and institutions to maintain equilibrium in the post-conflict processes.

#### **3.2.4. Governance and participation**

Building good governance and promoting participation are indispensable for the implementation and sustainability of the aim of peacebuilding, reconstruction and development in post-conflict. The African Union upholds the promotion of democracy (which also entails public participation), the values of good governance (which includes political inclusiveness), the rule of law, and human security, among its strategic objectives for peace and development of the African continent (NEPAD Secretariat 2005:1 & 4). As a key measure of post-conflict processes, this pillar focuses on governance and public administration reform. It encompasses building legitimate and functioning political systems that are pivotal for the effective and long-term operationalization of the state (AUSA/CSIS Framework 2002:3). This undertaking further involves the establishment of functioning administrative institutions that are constitutionally representative of the people, transparent and accountable, and promotes civil society participation and inclusiveness in public decision-making processes (NEPAD Secretariat 2005:11). As noted by the United Nations (2009:4), (re)building governance and public administration in the post-conflict is important for preventing relapse into conflict and establishing peace and sustainable development. However, note is taken that the challenges associated with (re)constructing and (re)establishing these activities are predominantly salient in societies emerging or recovering from conflict.

According to Orr (2002:140-141) governance and participation can be perceived as a requisite interactive and collaborative practice between the government (top-down governance process) and the governed (bottom-up participatory process). Advancing this pillar necessitates for indigenous voices to be heard through participation in official government and local elections; engagements in political parties; active civil society compositions and interactions via advocacy groupings, media outlets and civic organizations; thus local ownership of the processes (Orr 2002:141). This simply means that the effectiveness of governance reform agendas depends on the genre and form of the post-conflict political leadership and its capacity to drive human and institutional development, deliver services and empower the population to be actively involved (United Nations 2009:4). This as such goes beyond the dependence on governments to include the essential capacity of the civil society and the importance of decentralization of power as a mechanism to increase local representation and accountability and as an approach to a national vision for nation-building (African Union 2006:11).

In this phase of post-conflict, enhancing participation needs to be undergirded by operational leadership, which must tally with the promotion of gender equality. UN Women advocate for responsive governance that advances women's human rights and takes into consideration the social affairs that emasculate their fitness to proactively contribute to public decision-making, while reacting to exclusionary practices against them (UNIFEM 2008:2). Vying for governance reforms that are more gender responsive connotes the interests, needs and priorities of women, specifically their access to socio-economic, political and security welfare, must be effectively addressed by the institutions in place (UNIFEM 2008:2). This is to say reforms undertaken in the post-conflict must bring about greater accountability to women by guaranteeing their human and civil rights, equal privileges to hold positions of leadership, and contribute to decision-making both as elites and grassroots women (African Union 2006:11 & 12).

In the context of this fore-discussed theory, it is critical for post-conflict mechanisms to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of the citizens in accessing the benefits that should accrue when a society and a people transition from conflict. Evidently, the theoretical discourses on how peace is built in the aftermath of conflict lay quite some emphasis on

operational mainstreaming of gender, especially of women who often are under-represented, into the agendas as a mainstay of inclusiveness. This theoretical framework of post-conflict recovery is of relevance because it is within the theory's pillars of activities that this study examines and addresses inquiries about the instrumentality and progression of women's role in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture. Being in line with the first research question and objective of this study, the discussions and analyses presented in chapters five and six particularly delve into how women individually and as organizations, and through government and development partners' support, navigate these post-conflict processes. So in expounding the trend of post-conflict activities, note is taken that the theory underscores the indispensability of various actors and stakeholders for the purposes of effective implementation. Acknowledging that state and international interventions are major constitutive components in ensuring successful and sustainable processes in this framework of peacebuilding, reconstruction and development theory will likewise enable understanding of one of the study's objectives on how these actors support women's peacebuilding agency.

From the cited position of the African Union, the United Nations, and the policy contexts above, this gender dimension (women focused) is understood to unlock the window of opportunity for effective post-conflict processes, seeing as they accentuate the agency of women's access and inclusion as an imperative. An important point highlighted in the previous chapter is the tendency to exclude women in post-conflict processes despite the brunt of violence and insecurity, broken relationships, and socio-economic and political injustices they bear during conflicts. Hence in view of current debates, this theoretical and policy transference actually lends power to women's voices, since women in conflict and post-conflict societies<sup>39</sup> are continually organizing to seize the processes and (re)claim their positions as architects of change. In this respect, the language of women's needs and interests is of particular importance from the conceptualization phase through to the operationalization of the post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development interventions. However, the question about how these interests are and should be considered is not an instinctive equation in the processes. As such, this necessitates the harmonization of

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<sup>39</sup> A few examples here include Liberia, South Africa, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Mozambique, Sudan and South Sudan, DRC, Burundi, Mali, Somalia, Central African Republic, etc.



women's interests, which the literature review chapter asserted to be systematically advanced under the patronage of women organizations. To understand this trend of thoughts, knowledge is acquired from Maxine Molyneux's organizational theory, where she discursively assesses the distinctiveness of women's organizations, as well as women's practical and strategic gender interests, which are often at the centre of their agency for a cause.

### **3.3. Maxine Molyneux's organizational theory**

This section begins with three major contentions. Firstly, that women organizing to influence or contribute to peace in conflict and post-conflict situations has become the new orthodoxy globally. Secondly, the mushrooming of women organizations especially in (post-) conflict situations is strategic to ensure their interests and rights to equal participation are taken into consideration in the agendas for peace, reconstruction and development. Thirdly, assembling under the aegis of women's organizations creates an apposite environment for women's empowerment and platform to undertake and engage in collective actions. This collectivity consequentially boosts their practical inclusion into the equation of post-conflict policies and engagements.

An ornate insight of women's organizing in the framework of organizational theory is propounded by Maxine Molyneux, a sociologist and theoretician of women's movement. Generally, women's organizations, whether grassroots, national or regional, are voluntary in nature and are often established with the purpose of promoting, piloting, and overseeing issues pertaining to women's welfare and gender equality (Kumar 2000: v). The formation of women's organizations during, and especially in the aftermath of conflicts owe to a number of factors that include, but are not limited to:

- i. The consequences of conflicts that destabilized and transformed the order of socio-economic, political and security functioning of society, and in turn enhanced and fostered the participation of women in public affairs;



- ii. Women's need to promote feminist agendas because of their disenchantment with political leaders and parties that promise to support gender equal policies and opportunities, yet failed to deliver;
- iii. Post-conflict transitional peace, reconstruction and development processes by governments embracing democratic principles created public platforms for the autonomous materialization, establishment, and exemplification of women's organizations; and
- iv. The operationalization of international bodies through NGOs to foster policies on women's empowerment and gender equality, and promote the establishment of efficient civil society institutions, which sequentially inspired the development of women's organizations (Kumar 2000:v).

Transitioning from war to peace seems to unlock unique windows of opportunities for the establishment of women's organizations. Theorizing about this, Molyneux (2001:3) asserts that women's movements or organizations entail the exercise of collective action in search of socio-political goals and rejoinders to common challenges, especially in the milieu of modern state emergence and economic change. According to Eyben (2011:6), collective action is important for women who are discriminated against. Through this action, women generally can mandate for political, social and economic transformation, as well as demand accountability on the delivery of existing policies from institutions. In view thereof, Butler, Ruane and Sastry (2015:17) aver that given women's agency to build peace that is sustainable and advance the principles of justice and equality, the processes of building peace and averting conflicts therefore obligates for the contributions of women's movements/organizations. Besides, Molyneux (2000) in one of her analytical studies on *...State Formations Latin America...*, asserts that women's agency, expressed especially through the association of women's movements, is significant in impacting and advancing women's rights in the realm of state affairs.

Further inferring from some of Molyneux's (1985 and 2001) writings on women's movements, it is noted that the incorporation of women into whatever processes or affairs can be complete only if their specific experiences and interests/goals as organizations are viewed

as heterogeneous rather than homogeneous. This explains why she uses the organizational lens to expand on the areas of women's interests, aligning both the practical and strategic as gender interests (Molyneux 1985:232). Speaking of gender interests, it refers to those interests that "women most especially (and sometimes men) may develop by virtue of their social positioning through gender attributes" (Molyneux 1985:232). In view of this, she emphasizes that women's interests should be distinguished in order to tell apart differentiated objectives and goals undertaken by women's movements or organizations as a collective or as women's representative (Molyneux 2001:4).

### **3.3.1. Women's practical gender interest**

Practical gender interests are those instant and socially accepted basic needs like safe water, food, housing, health care, monetary income, employment and transportation, required and identified by women (or men) as indispensable for their daily human survival (Molyneux 1985:233; UNESCO 2003). Addressing these interests is quite vital for the change and advancement of day-to-day living circumstances since they arise as a consequence of the immediate social issues directly affecting women in particular (Molyneux 1985:233). The process of delivering on these interests would entail strengthening the agency and efforts of women through engagements in Women in Development (WID) programmes and supporting women's role and contributions as agents of change in all development agendas (United Nations Development Programme 2001:66). As a strategy to address the issue of women's exclusion and limited participation in development processes, the WID projects embrace an approach that focuses more on women and their practical needs (Reeves and Baden 2000:33). This approach underscores the importance of integrating women into all development programmes as a rationale for attaining effectiveness and creating an empowering environment that fosters their participation and access to identified interests and needs (Reeves and Baden 2000:33; United Nations Development Programme 2001:78).

Despite this approach, the sexual division of labour which builds on the notion that "it is the women's traditional responsibilities to provide for their families" and the institutionalized patriarchal structures in society, remain unchallenged when addressing women's practical gender interests (Molyneux 1985:233). It is important to note in the light of Molyneux's

assertion that more than thirty years down the line, this perspective has gradually changed since women have become more assertive of their rights, place, and roles in society (as elucidated in chapter five). Besides, various policy instruments as reviewed in the previous chapter, are continually being established to further lend women their voice and recognition as equal participants in decision-making and development processes. Apparently, time has progressively transformed the world's view of women roles in decision-making processes. However, the challenges that confront them in their different roles are many and can be attributed to different factors as presented in chapter seven of this study. For example, the failure of policy makers to address the issue of women's reproductive roles in the WID approach (Reeves and Baden 2000:33) accounts for some of the reasons why women remain socially marginalized in society. Meanwhile, this does not entail a disaggregation of women's practical gender interests from those that are strategic. Molyneux underscores the importance of transforming these women's practical gender interests into strategic interests. This change is basic, since creating the platform for women to access their practical interests also serves as a gateway to consult and address issues of gender inequality and women's empowerment and representation in due course (United Nations Development Programme 2001:44). In light of women's practical gender interests therefore, the underlying question becomes whether to deliver on the interests or engage more transformative strategies that will address what triggered their lack or inaccessibility in the first place.

### **3.3.2. Women's strategic gender interest**

Strategic gender interests or needs are those considered as women's real interests, and aim to address the problem of women's subordinate positions in society (Molyneux 1985:233). Ensuring the realization of strategic interests and needs entail undertaking programmes that are informed by Gender and Development (GAD) approach. This approach necessitates measures that challenge extant inequalities that directly affect women or that exist between women and men in development and decision-making processes (Reeves and Baden 2000:33). As such, it prompts for transformation in the domains of power sharing and gender division of labour. Accordingly, Molyneux (1985:233) asserts that such transformation may include developments that incorporate women in public decision-making processes and allows them access, control and ownership of resources or credits. Likewise, it accords women equal

political rights and social liberty over matters of procreation and puts in place measures to end domestic and sexual violence against women (Molyneux 1985:233). Through the lens of GAD approach, this transformation also entails integrating gender concerns into development agendas, empowering and promoting women’s efforts/roles as important agents of development (United Nations Development Programme 2001:78 & 79). Intrinsically, strategic gender interests center on political and specific transformative strategies that aim to change social relations, advance and maintain women’s overall positions within the gender sequence and society.

While the strategic gender interest obviously builds on the policies of gender redistribution,<sup>40</sup> distinguishing such interests is often a challenge for women (United Nations Development Programme 2001:44 & 62). But, once these strategic interests are pinpointed, addressing them creates that needed platform for Women (or men) to attain equality that is far-reaching and alter prevailing gender roles and typecasts (CEDPA 2000). As noted by Reeves and Baden (2000:14) the first step to achieving strategic gender interests begins with collective coordination by NGOs and women’s organizations around the practical gender interests.

The table below provides a summarized demarcation of women’s practical and strategic gender interests, and outlines indicators of positive changes that are likely to occur in women’s situations and positions once their interests are addressed.

**Table 3.1: Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Interests & Indicators of Positive Changes in Women’s Conditions and Positions**

Practical Needs	Strategic Needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tend to be immediate and short-term</li> <li>- Unique to particular women</li> <li>- Relate to daily needs food, housing, income, health, children, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tend to be immediate and long-term</li> <li>- Common to almost all women</li> <li>- Relate to the disadvantaged position; subordination, lack of resources and</li> </ul>

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<sup>40</sup> Gender redistributive policies are mostly concerned with strategic gender interests. These policies seek the transformation of gender discriminative policies and institutions in a bit to create and advance equal relationship between women and men (United Nations Development Programme 2001: 62).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Easily identifiable by women.</li> <li>- Can be addressed by the provision of specific inputs, food, hand pumps, clinic, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>education, vulnerability to poverty and violence, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Basis of disadvantage and potential for change not always identifiable by women</li> <li>- Can be addressed by; consciousness-raising, increasing self-confidence, education, strengthening women' organizations, political mobilization, etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Addressing Practical Needs</b></p>	<p><b>Addressing Strategic Interests</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tends to involve women as <i>beneficiaries</i> and <i>participants</i></li> <li>- Can improve or benefit the <i>condition</i> of women's lives</li> <li>- Generally does not alter traditional roles and relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Involves women as active <i>agents</i> or <i>enables</i> women to become agents</li> <li>- Can improve the <i>position</i> of women in society</li> <li>- Can <i>empower</i> women and <i>transform</i> relationships</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>Indicators of Positive Changes in Women's Condition</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased acceptance by women and men of women as community decision-makers</li> <li>- Greater personal and economic independence and self-confidence for women</li> <li>- Increased women's involvement in personal, family or community development, more visible, and more effective women's organizations</li> <li>- More women in education and training programmes</li> <li>- Improved health of women and children</li> </ul>	
<p align="center"><b>Indicators of Positive Changes and Improvements in Women's Position</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improvements in women's legal status</li> <li>- A decline in violence against women</li> <li>- Increased women's control over their fertility</li> <li>- Reduced institutional discrimination and bias against women</li> <li>- Increased public awareness of women's issues</li> </ul>	

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- Improved women's empowerment
  - Improved social position for women
  - Greater access and control
  - Increased autonomy for women

**Source:** United Nations Development Programme (2001). Gender in Development Programme - Learning & Information Pack. Gender Analysis. Available at: <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/Institutional%20Development/TLGEN1.6%20UNDP%20GenderAnalysis%20toolkit.pdf> pp. 73 - 77.

According to Molyneux (1985:233), these interests are best promoted and achieved with progress under organizational umbrellas, whose role in society remains key for theory and practice. Within the context of the organizational theory, Moser (1991:109) draws attention to the fact that the nature of women's strategic interests or needs are challenging at all levels of the society. She further maintains that women organizing to address and realize these interests at the grassroots level are seldom readily assisted nationally by their governments or internationally by development aid organizations (Moser 1991:110). In light of this assertion, it becomes important to note that there have been enormous and transformative shifts twenty-five years down the line. This is in the sense that both governments and development support bodies are increasingly engaging strategies to assist efforts aimed to consolidate peace and promote security and development at most, and if not, at all levels of the grassroots engagements. Scholar-practitioners' response to this include expressions for limited international intervention in political dealings in the short-term and for greater participation, coordination and orientation of peace processes to be grounded on local (bottom-up approach) and national (top-down approach) context in the long-term (Lederach 1997). Speaking of grassroots, Suarez (1995:190) underscores the importance of organizations at this levels as indispensable elements of women organizing internationally, regionally and nationally especially in the framework of the organizational theory. Given that women are the majority population at the grassroots level, Lederach (1997 and 2005) as does the United Nations (2009:9) accentuate that the effectiveness of peacebuilding largely depends on actively involving this group in the processes of post-conflict. More so, Eyben (2011:6) avers that the role grassroots organizations play (especially through empowerment and

participatory activism) to ensure that women's interests are addressed is quite important in revolutionizing historical and patriarchal relations of inequality and marginalization.

It is perhaps important to underscore that Molyneux's organizational theory supports the context of women's leadership and development. According to Ely, Ibarra and Kold (2011:5), the framework of women's leadership and development is distinctively focused on how women's leading roles in society are shaped by gender, and humanized to foster a sense of agency and organization without either oppressing or silencing their views. Central to this perspective is the objective of 'transformation' which delineates both concepts of leadership and development. Bass (1999:9-10) draws attention to the fact that this framework promotes collaborative organizational culture and obliges a high level of moral development, which is predominantly ingrained in women since they are apt in being more transformational than men are. However, not all women or women groupings embrace the collaborative elegance. Appelbaum *et.al* (2003:45) also remark that the engagement of women in transformational approaches, which straddles participation in decision-making and implementation processes (among others) have often moved both genders in arriving at successful shared resolutions.

Assaying the orientation of women's organizations and the diversity of interests that propel them as highlighted in Molyneux's organizational theory, it can be resolved that they are strategically and discursively well-thought-out. Reading from the above discussions therefore, one may well reckon that the centrality of women organizations in the equation of post-conflict agendas builds on the understanding that:

“Women's organizing and organizations supports an enabling environment for women empowerment and is key to securing government policies and private sector practices that make a difference to women's lives” (Eyben 2011:6) and to society's oriented objectives of short- mid- and long-term goals for peace, reconstruction and development.

This assertion is a reality for women's organizations as elaborated in chapter five, which specifically build on the experiences, approaches and relations of women organizing in the framework of Liberia's peacebuilding architecture. Therefore, adopting Molyneux's organizational theory for this study is central towards ensuring that the role of women's organizations in peacebuilding is appraised on purpose of their distinctiveness of strategies and approaches in attaining the agenda of peace in Liberia. The organizational theory further



informs this study in that the strategies employed by women's organizing for peace generally builds from both identified practical and strategic interests, which considerably influence the organizations' set goals and objectives for attaining peace. It also provides the basis for which the study assesses how diversified women's practical and strategic interests have been consolidated by their different networks of organizations in Liberia, and its consequent outcomes on post-conflict activities. Thus, a point of convergence with the organizational theory, which this study also builds on, is the understanding that the practical consideration of women's interests is likely to minimize the challenges of exclusion and gender-linked discrimination.

Taking cognizance of the question that formed the thematic focus of this chapter, the theoretical (peacebuilding, reconstruction and development theory; and Maxine Molyneux's organizational theory) underpinnings to address it are quite plausible. Alongside these theoretic resolves, abound another inquiry that seeks to understand what approach(es) facilitate sustainable progress and best advance the inclusiveness of women and women's organizations as equal stakeholders in post-conflict processes. Noting that both theories communicate the importance of human rights by emphasizing women's gender equality, mainstreaming, and gender-responsive processes, makes it easy for the study to relate to the rights based approach to peacebuilding. This approach, grounded within the framework of international human rights principles, contextualizes and practically identifies human rights to be at the foundation of post-conflict and human development processes.

### **3.4. Rights-based approach to peacebuilding**

There is no gainsaying that in situations of post-conflict, socio-economic rights, civil and political rights, and rights to human security in its entirety are weighed into the content and context of post-conflict processes. The concept of rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948, underpins two international instruments – the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) 1966. These together with the UDHR form the International Bill of Human Rights and establish the main criteria of International Human Rights Law (Goonesekere 2005). To this Bill are treaties and

conventions (including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the UN Vienna Convention, and those earlier mentioned in chapter two) to protect the civil, political, economic, and social rights of people. Sida (2012:1) defines human rights as those universal “political, social and economic rights of individuals or groups (rights holder), which the state (duty bearer) is obligated to fulfil and defend.” The crux of human rights is the principle of equality, inalienable human rights to all (men, women and children) without any form or basis of discrimination. Ensuring access to these rights is crucial for the successful attainment of post-conflict processes. Moreover, it is in this human rights canon that the foundation of the rights-based approach resides.

The right-based approach (RBA) is a significantly profiled component in peace processes and development discourses across the globe. This approach underscores the fundamentality and centrality of safeguarding and realizing human rights and freedoms in all activities, including post-conflict developments and humanitarian assistance (Goonesekere 2005). To Molyneux and Lazar (2003:7 & 8), RBA is an operational people-centred development strategy that brings to the fore the importance of inclusive, participatory and empowering processes attained through the joint agency of the people. Likewise, the approach aims at transforming the relation between the citizens and the state by espousing a ‘vision that is more strategic and focused on what citizens are entitled to, and what they need for the advancement of their development’ (Molyneux and Lazar 2003:10 & 11). In the frame of post-conflict processes, this approach addresses the issues and dichotomies of the inequalities that undermine the human and civil rights of women, cause prejudiced and exclusionary practices, and impinge on their peacebuilding role as well as development progress.

The context of the rights-based approach to peacebuilding integrates international human rights standards into policies and actions instituted to support peacebuilding practices (Schabas & Fitzmaurice 2007:8). The outlook of human rights principles is, and remain a strategic component for achieving peace and development objectives, since it ventures to address issues of discrimination, exclusion, powerlessness and unaccountability that often impede peace and development success (OHCHR 2006:8). This denotes that promoting and protecting rights that go beyond human rights and include economic, socio-cultural, political

rights to civic participation and development, and rights to peace and security, are a central component of peacebuilding and the (re)construction of post-conflict societies (Moser et.al 2001:37). The fact of this recognition and its implication for post-conflict processes is founded on the claim that sustainable peace can only be attained if the socio-economic inequalities, structural discrimination, and injustices that challenge effective peacebuilding are addressed (Schabas & Fitzmaurice 2007: 8). In light of these, InsightShare (2010:13) and Sida (2012:1-2) aver that the overall goal of the RBA is to:

- i. Build capacity of individuals and communities to understand, claim and fulfil their individual and collective rights;
- ii. Structurally and systematically integrate the principles of human rights into peacebuilding and development processes;
- iii. Encourage and empower the powerless and marginalized communities and groups, and strengthen participation in peace and development processes;
- iv. Create platforms that encourage and support local ownership of peace and development programmes; and
- v. Avail tools to strengthen the potential of states to build-up and increase the opportunities for constructive dialogues with rights-holders, and to fulfil their responsibilities as duty-bearers.

These fundamental aspects of the RBA intrinsically opine that women are an integral and significant part of post-conflict and decision-making processes, and only when women's rights are taken into consideration would the processes be seen as integrated to effectively achieve its stated objectives. A sacrosanct connotation of the RBA and the above-discussed theories is to understand their practicality and relevance in existing global discourses and researches on the subject of this thesis, and principally in the context of African experiences. Evidently, a straightforward contention then would be that the processes and success of post-conflict strategies need to equip stakeholders at all levels, particularly women, to work towards the common goal of sustainable peace as hypothesized by this study. This is of importance given

that the stakes in post-conflict processes are quite considerable, and adopting an inclusive approach remains a necessary component of what outcome is achieved.

### **3.5. Conclusion**

This chapter generally focused on the theoretical frameworks of Post-conflict Peacebuilding, Reconstruction and development, and organizational theory as propounded by Maxine Molyneux, which underlie this study. The adoption of these theories emanated from the gaps in literature, which are identified in chapter two. The basis of the post-conflict theory in the context of this study builds on the understanding and contentions that the effective realization of post-conflict activities is considerably contingent on inclusivity, mainstreaming and gender-responsiveness of the implementation processes. Espousing this dimension on which the activities are subject to, the chapter asserted their importance to addressing the challenge of women's exclusion and under-representation, and the influence of patriarchy. Besides, adopting the framework also derived from the fact that little analysis has been done that comprehensively theorizes the intersection of women's peacebuilding roles in all domains of post-conflict recovery processes. Also noting the multifaceted experiences and role of women in conflict and post-conflict, and organization for peace as presented in the previous chapter, this chapter drew attention to the fact that not as much attention has been given to the diverse nature of women's organizing and distinct interests-oriented objectives in the peacebuilding agendas. As such, the chapter surmised from Molyneux's organizational theory that the incorporation of women into post-conflict processes can only be seen as complete if women's organizing and interests are cogitated into the framework of initiation and implementation as heterogeneous rather than homogeneous. Alongside the theoretical frameworks, the chapter acknowledged the prerogatives of women's participation and representation as a human right. In this manner, it expounded on the consideration of a rights-based approach to peacebuilding as pivotal to the realization of inclusive peacebuilding processes.

The chapter examined the rapport between the theories to interrogate and establish the stature and significance of women's peacebuilding roles in society. Grounded on the thematic inquiry on how peace is built in post-conflict societies, the chapter undertook to underline the theoretical importance of the pillars that make up post-conflict processes as interchangeably

linked and vital to the realization of peace. In anchoring the analysis, it attempted to locate the role of women in the post-conflict recovery agendas by postulating the agencies of women's organizations and women's gender interests, as propounded by Molyneux, as the driving force for their involvement, representation, inclusivity in the processes. While, these theoretical considerations are contextualized in chapters' five to seven on data presentations, analyses, and findings, the chapter that follows discusses the research methodology and methods employed by this study to address the research questions and attain its objectives.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

#### 4.1. Introduction

Research generally entails the pursuit of knowledge through data gathering. Conducting research embodies the acquisition and expansion of scientific knowledge through a variety of methods and techniques (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell 2005:2). Taking from this meaning, research is systemically more or less guided by fundamental philosophical premises that probes and explores the topic under study. The ‘how and what’ lenses used when conducting a research study basically provides insight into a summary of what the research entails (Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi 2013:2). Studying how research is carried out, the design or methods (which can either be qualitative, quantitative, mixed) employed by researchers to acquire knowledge, is known as research methodology (Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi 2013:5). In this light, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) define methodology as a fundamental set of principles, methods and techniques that can be used to enable the collection and analysis of data. Therefore, research methodology is an embodiment of steps or processes wherein different measures are undertaken to address the problems delineated in the study, respond to the questions posed, and attain set objectives through the exploration of observed phenomena and management of data acquired.

This chapter discusses the research methodology and methods espoused for this study. It details the research approach and methods used for data collection, the research sample technique and population, sources and research process, types and methods of data analysis, ethical considerations and research limitations, and the challenges encountered in the course of realizing this study., The study was underpinned by the qualitative research methodology to address the research questions and achieve the study’s stated objectives. Thus, the study necessitated empirical research method to gain thorough understanding of the Liberian experience of women’s role in peacebuilding architecture under the auspices of women’s organizations, and in the context of (post-) conflict developments.

## **4.2. Research paradigm**

Since this study had as one of its aims to contribute to literature, while also proffering recommendations to address the socio-economic and political inequalities faced by women in their peacebuilding efforts in Liberia, the methodology adopted was informed by the critical research paradigm. This paradigm builds on practical socio-cultural, economic, political, ethnic, and gender realities, which are constantly influenced by human activities or socially constructed events (Scotland 2012:13). According to Chilisa and Kawulich (2012:59-60), the critical paradigm allows for dialogue and reflection or 'reflective dialogic' between the researcher and participants, and sets the scene for existing social, political, cultural, economic and other ideologies and beliefs of society to be challenged in an attempt to promote programmes that bring about change. Thus, it seeks to address concerns of social justice and marginalization (Scotland 2012:13). Dick (2000:1) also notes that the paradigm is indicative of action research, which is cyclic, participative, qualitative, critically reflective and responsive to the situation that is either being studied or under examination. Drawing from field engagement with participants in Liberia, the processes of focus group discussions and interview sessions were quite reflective and captured the experiences, narratives and viewpoints of the participants on past and current issues on the subject of consolidating post-conflict developments processes and the role of women therein in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture.

## **4.3. Methodological approach**

This study specifically adopted the qualitative research methodology. This form of methodology is essentially exploratory and descriptive in nature and does not involve experimental and numeric research designs, which primarily involve the use of quantitative research methodology (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell 2005: 78 & 188). This in other words means that qualitative research for the most part is used to manage info garnered either through primary or other secondary sources of information that cannot be otherwise accomplished using quantitative research methods. To Domegan and Fleming (2007), qualitative research method embroils investigations of particular and intricate social phenomena and access to the experiences of the research subject in a manner that generates



rich interpretative and descriptive data that gives meaning to the phenomena. The use of the qualitative research method in this study was a descriptive narrative in the form of focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews.

In conformity with Wilmot's (2005: 219) view of the importance of qualitative research, this study found the method to be most suitable, as it furnished me with an insightful tool as it is from the perspectives and experiences of women and women's organizations in Liberia. Likewise, it provided me with the *modus operandi* to understand, generate and explore the research assumptions of this study; logically accomplish and engender qualitative justifications of the study's research questions and objectives; and unearth rich insights through close involvement in the process of data collection (Wilmot 2005:219). To be specific, this research method was employed to critically examine women's peacebuilding roles in the framework of (post)-conflict recovery processes in Liberia.

Since the research is geographically delineated to Liberia, the case study design was also adopted as the unit of analysis for this dissertation. According to Zainal (2007:1), the case study design involves comprehensive description, explanation, and understanding of social and human behavioural aspects from the research subjects' perspectives. The question of what needed to be analysed (Baxter and Jack 2008:546), which in this context included 'questions concerning the role of women in peacebuilding, the mechanisms and strategies engaged to attain peace, the peacebuilding processes undertaken, and the women's organizations and institutions involved in facilitating the processes, guided the delineation of the Liberian case study. Zainal (2007:1) pinpoints that this design is common especially in the social science disciplines, and allows for the meticulous examination of context specific information. For this study, the context specific information was built on the determination of women to empower the ends of peace within the Liberian context, specifically during and in the matter of post-conflict. Thus, Baxter and Jack (2008:545) emphasize the importance of context in the case study design as a necessary consideration in studying the unit of analysis in order to better explicate the phenomenon and actual setting within which the event transpired. Drawing from this understanding, the reason for using the case study design was therefore to provide material and conceptual boundaries for the study. Likewise, it was used to originate clear contextual understanding to permit the reliable interpretation of the experiences of the

participants as it pertains to the different perspectives about women and peacebuilding in Liberia.

#### **4.4. Sources of data collection**

**Primary Sources:** Cognizant that this study was delimited to the case study of Liberia, *focus group discussions* and open ended *individual semi-structured interviews* were used to collect data. These methods of gathering information constitute an important source of primary data. According to Nagle and Williams (2008:2), using focus group methodology “provide insights into how people reason and a profound understanding of the phenomena being studied.” While, interviews are quite valuable in terms of acquiring in-depth information needed for research purposes. Focusing on semi-structured interviews, Harrell and Bradley (2009:27) aver that they provide the researcher with the opportunity that is far-reaching in exploring the topics and themes under examination, and obtaining thorough responses to the interview questions. In line with these assertions, conducting the focus group discussions and interviews helped me to acquire a broad understanding of the research participants’ involvements in peacebuilding, while creating the platform for the participants to freely express and exchange their views and experiences. For emphasis, these sources of data collection equally furnished me with a constructive method of exploring the responses provided to generate data and substantive understanding of the women and peacebuilding debate in Liberia.

In a bid to relate the utility of the focus groups, it occurred in the study that the focus group discussions proved to be an inexpensive way of gathering data from a potentially large number of respondents. This is because severally well-designed questions were effectively used in this study to gather information from different focus groups engaged with the aim of either validating or falsifying the claims being made in this study. This method of data collection was also very instrumental in realizing the originality target of the study, since information relevant to the study were carefully extracted from the people directly concerned on those specificities as it relates to the research. Furthermore, focus group proved easy to administer, which was necessary to ensure that participants responded relatively honestly. Therefore, this method of data collection was relevant in this study chiefly because it is an important data collection method that specifically improves quality of data, especially considering the

presentations, analyses and study findings described in chapters' five to seven. In this study, the methodological pattern that primes purposive/judgemental sampling (explained in the subsequent section) of a qualitative research undertaking is in synch with the focus group. This is because, part of the elementary reasons of focus groups is to provide data that will enhance credibility of claims and change or create a new direction of thoughts. These thoughts are based on pronounced evidence, particularly to the target units of women's organizations, government institutions, as well as international and local agencies for corroboration of facts and formulation of policies.

Assuredly, the value of the information gathered through focus groups were dependent on defined objectives and the preparations done prior to conducting the focus group interviews. These conditions were met in the set objectives of this dissertation from whence the questions were formulated. This is besides the account that I had to physically travel to Liberia to meet and speak with the groups directly identified for the study, and whose inputs were prerequisite for the successful completion of this qualitative research. Therefore, through the focus group engagements, valuable information as presented in the chapters that follow, was derived from the discussions.

Similarly, this study made use of semi-structured interviews to explore the views of participants on the subject of women and peacebuilding in Liberia. De Vos *et al.* (2011:342) allude that Semi-structured interviews are the most generic form of interviewing people, and widely used method of exploring and collecting data in the qualitative research. The use of semi-structured interviews in this study made it possible to compare and interpret the respondents' views because of the formatted nature and standardization of the questions (Barriball and While 1994:330). The study conducted semi-structured interviews with a select group of sixteen individuals (explained below), whose views and experiences as presented in chapter five, could not be discussed in isolation from that of the organizations they work with and for. The advantage with the semi-structured interviews as it relates to the methodology of this study is that the respondents were encouraged to talk freely about the subject, but kept to the point on issues of interest which I had outlined as central to the objectives of this study. The respondents were encouraged to reveal most of what they felt about the subject under discussion, and this is the core of the qualitative research and methods. I mingled well and

controlled the pace of the interviews, which I conducted in Liberia. In line with the academic tradition of qualitative research and the choice of interview as a strategic method in deducing data, the semi-structure interviews I used for this study drew rich insights from the participants' expert opinions and experiences on the research subject as a comprehensive primary data source to work with.

Meeting all participants face to face for focus group discussions and interviews served as the ideal platform for me to gather first hand and vital information on the research topic recounted as stories and expressed as viewpoints. Knowledge transferred during this data collection process helped assess the proposition of how significant women's leading roles in peacebuilding are in impacting the attainment of peace, reconstruction and development objectives at all levels of the society. In addition to these sources of data collection, the study also made use of official legal and policy written documents and documentaries.

Donald *et al.* (2006) maintain that the use of written document to acquire and advance insights of the phenomenon under examination, is also one of the data sources researchers may employ. These may comprise a variety of documents, such as written, visual, and physical data. For this study, the data source included documents on the subjects of women, peace and security; post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development; and government and organizations' memorandums or guiding documents premised on policies for enhancing women peacebuilding and development efforts in Liberia. Some of these included the UNSCR 1325, Liberia's National Gender Policy, Poverty reduction Strategy, National Gender-Based Action Plan, just to name but a few. In terms of documentaries the study used visual sources such as, 'Women of Liberia: Fighting for Peace', 'Pray the Devil Back to Hell', as well as conference and seminar talks by one of the many Liberian peace activists, Madam Leymah Gbowee. While these documents did not constitute a focal point of primary data collection, they served as a source where a series of recounts, provisions, and guiding principles were drawn from them to elucidate certain points and contentions presented in the study.

**Secondary Sources:** The secondary data for this study included a wide range of published and unpublished works. Secondary data comprises the material that was already produced by

another for a study other than that being researched by the researcher (Quinlan 2011). The secondary data for this study was mostly desktop reviews and included peer-reviewed journal articles, books, research papers, newspaper and magazine articles and media reports, and policy briefs, theses, and reliable and verifiable information available on the Internet. These sources of information were particularly important as they served to strengthen and complement the quality of the primary data gathered. More so, the sources of information were readily accessible and of relevance for use to achieve some of the study's goals. Likewise, these sources were valuable and robust for the build-up of the theoretical and textual background of this dissertation.

#### **4.5. Sampling method and sample population/size**

A sample constitutes a part of a focus population prudently selected as the representative constituent of the study's target population, which must be reflective of the individualities of the set populace (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler 2014). According to (Brynard, Hanekom and Brynard (2014), a population, is the total of all the elements that share some common set of characteristics. The study made use of purposive or judgement sampling since the research is empirically qualitative. Purposive sample is a category of non-probability sampling method that is used as a tool to purposefully select the sample population or size (Creswell 1994: 148; Tongco 2007: 147). Adopting a purposive sampling method provided me with the choice to decide the target population for the study, which was based on the background information gathered on the said research population. Accordingly, the selection was grounded on the participants' knowledge in the context and content of the discussion, and their experiences and involvement on events, policies and activities concerned with women's agency, decision-making positions and contributions to Liberia's peacebuilding, reconstruction and development goals.

In the above given, women organizations that were active in building peace during and in the aftermath of the Liberian civil wars, as well as key government, local and international stakeholders in Liberian peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction and development processes, were purposefully selected as the group of interest for this study. Hence, the research population for the study constituted of *sixteen (16)* individual participants for the semi-

structured interviews, and *four (4) focus group discussions*, consisting of a total of *forty five (45)*<sup>41</sup> participants, in which *six (6)* are also part of the *16* who participated in the individual interviews. This is to say *fifty five (55)*<sup>42</sup> is the total number of people who participated in this study. While the problem of time constraints and limited financial resources were the reasons for the selected sample, the element of the small sample size was necessary for the simplification of the data collection process and for the integration and critical examination of both theory and practice. More so, this sample was easily accessible to me. For simple comprehension, this sample size or participants constituted of four groupings as delineated by the study, and these included:

**Women’s organizations:** This group comprised of women organizations in Monrovia the capital of Liberia, Gbargna City of Bong County, and Ganta City of Nimba County. These two counties were purposefully chosen because they were the entry points of the rebels during the first war, and major conflict encounters occurred in these counties during the two conflicts, resulting in death of thousands of civilians, displaced population, the kidnapping and rape of children, women, and girls, as well as the destruction of property. Nimba County in particular, was an active conflict battlefield throughout the fourteen years of conflict. At the level of the capital city, *five (5)* interviews were conducted with individual women representatives of the following Monrovia-based organizations WANEP/WIPNET, MARWOPNET, NAWOCOL, LIFLEA, and WONGOSOL. In the same light, another *(1)* interview was also held with Mother Mary Brownell in Monrovia, a prominent peace activist and a retired educator. In Gbargna City, Bong County, *two (2)* focus group discussions were held with the women of WIPNET. The reason for two separate focus groups with the same organization is because most of the women turned up to participate in the discussion. More so, *three (3)* semi-structured interviews were conducted with *one leader* and *two members* of the

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<sup>41</sup> While the study indicates that there were 45 participants in the four focus group discussions, it also draws attention to the fact that it would have been a total of 50 participants, however, five participants arrived a few minutes to the close of the second focus group discussions held in Ganta City, Nimba County and therefore did not contribute to the discourse. Also, because of time constraints, another focus group could not be conducted with these five participants, neither could they be interviewed individually.

<sup>42</sup> It is worth mentioning that the sample is focused only on women organizations that emerged and were very active during the conflict times and have continued in the post-conflict. This means the findings of this study can be used to make generalizations to the scope, while suggestions would be for other studies to explore women organizations that emerged post-conflict.



same grassroots organization. Likewise in Gbargna City, Bong County, another (1) interview was held with a representative of DEN-L. In Ganta City, Nimba County *two* (2) focus group discussions were held with Ganta Concern Women, given the turn out. Also, *three* (3) semi-structured interviews were conducted with *one leader* and *two members* of the same grassroots organization.

**Government Entity:** The government body consulted for the purpose of this study as of the Ministry Gender, Children & Social Protection (MoGCSP). In this Ministry, the interview was conducted with *one* (1) of the female deputy ministers, and I was also referred to consult several government reports and policy papers as more information on the research subject of focus are contained in these documents.

**The Media:** often, the media has a wider coverage and is up to date with events and information, generally playing a major role in the development of societies. This study conducted an (1) interview with one leading male representative of the Press Union of Liberia (PUL).

**International Body:** The international agency consulted for the purpose of this study was the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Office of Gender Advisor (OGA). With a mandate which includes the facilitation of gender sensitive approaches as it relates to UNSC 1325, including the support and inclusion of women in all UNMIL mandated priorities, *an* (1) interview was also conducted with a leading male representative of this office.

The rationale for interviewing the male representatives from PUL and UNMIL was to gain alternative and across-the-board insight on how men perceive the role of Liberian women in the arena of peacebuilding. Stating this importance and in line with the above grouping, a demographic of the participants in this research is presented below. In profiling the research subjects, I uphold the ethical requirement of confidentiality and anonymity agreed upon and uses pseudonyms for participants who preferred not to be mentioned in the presentation of the data. In this given, the pseudonyms (UI-1 up to 16) July 2015 are used for the *sixteen* individual interviews conducted. While, these pennames are not used in all the instances as some of the participants permitted for use of their actual names, which was also necessary to facilitate the flow of the data being presented and analysed. An important point to note in the



given of the semi-structured interviews conducted for this study is that the respondents' responses were guided and linked to the activities and works of the organizations they represent. For the focused group discussions, I used the aliases (FGD-A & FGD-B, and FGD-C & FGD-D) July 2015 for the four focus group discussions held with women of WIPNET in Gbargna City, Bong County, and Ganta Concern Women in Ganta City, Nimba County.

**UI-1 July 2015:** UI-1, is Chair of National Women's Commission of Liberia (NAWOCOL) and has worked with the organization since its inception in 1991. She left the United States of America November 1990 and came back to Liberia during the heat of the war to assist and contribute to efforts towards bringing peace back to her country Liberia.

**UI-2 July 2015:** UI-2, is the Executive Director of Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL). She is in her forties and her level of education is University, plus several other certificate training course. Before joining WONGOSOL in 2007 as a project supervisor, she worked with the NAWOCOL office during the war and right after the war, as a monitor of war survivors, especially women survivors. Since 2010, she has been responsible for the day to day running of the activities of the NGO in her capacity as Executive Director.

**UI-3 July 2015:** UI-3, Mother Mary Brownell is in her eighties, and holds a Master's Degree in Education from San Francisco State College, United States of America. She is one of the pioneer's and former president of the Liberian Women's Initiative (LWI) formed in 1994 during the first civil war. She is also a retired educator and former commissioner of the National Elections Commission of Liberia. She is widely recognized in Liberia for her peace activism during Liberia's civil wars, and though retired, she remains vocal on the subject and need of women's politicking for peace and decision-making roles in Liberia.

**UI-4 July 2015:** UI-4 is one of the Deputy Ministers in the Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection (MoGCSP) in Liberia, which was formed by an Act of the National Legislature in 2001. UI-4 is in her forties, holds a Master degree, and is also pursuing a doctorate degree. She is concerned with research, training and working both with women, girls and women organizations in Liberia as a representative of her Ministry.

**UI-5 July 2015:** UI-5 is one of the management personnel in the Press Union of Liberia (PUL), established in 1964. UI-1 is an influential media personnel in Liberia and his level of education is university, with qualifications in Mass Communications among other specific-oriented course trainings and credentials. He has played significant roles in the Liberia's Media Law and Policy Reform Working Group. Among other things, he consults and coordinates various projects, including on subjects of human rights, governance and community inclusiveness in Liberia.

**UI-6 July 2015:** UI-6 is in her fifties and she is educated to the level of university, and holds other credentials in women and child welfare protection, peacebuilding, security sector reform, among others. She is head of planning and training in the Liberian Female Law Enforcement Association (LIFLEA) founded in 2000, and has been working with the organization since 2009. Advocating for female security officers in all the security agency (private and Public) in Liberia, advancing for training for security female officers, seeking redress when their rights are trampled upon or when they are discriminated against or harassed in within the security sector, are among her many responsibilities.

**UI-7 July 2015:** UI-7 is a gender expert and advisor in his forties, and holds a Master's degree. He works for the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Office of Gender Advisor (OGA) as a Gender officer, and has been involved in post-conflict developments with UNMIL for over eight years. Generally, he provides strategic advice on issues of gender mainstreaming and women empowerment, partnering with the government and NGOs to ensure the implementation of UNSCR 1325 on women peace and security, as well as and other regional and international policy instruments on gender and women rights in Liberia.

**UI-8 July 2015:** UI-8 is in her thirties, holds a university degree, and works with Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) established in 2000, as one of its project representatives. She is concerned with peacebuilding networking, lobbying and advocating in collaboration with other NGO's to ensure the implementation of projects that empower bother women and girls, especially UNSCR 1325, as well as establishing peace committees in communities and clubs several clubs in in secondary and high schools in and around Monrovia.

**UI-9 July 2015:** UI-9 is in her fifties and is a degree holder. She coordinates the activities of West Africa Network for Peacebuilding/Women in Peacebuilding Network (WANEP/WIPNET) Liberia. She is concerned with the day to day running of the activities of the organization, and is involved in advocacy where protection and addressing issues of rape and domestic violence are prioritized, as well as training on how to carry on advocacy, engage community leaders, legislature and national leaders on issues of gender, women empowerment, leadership, reconciliation, and capacity building, among others.

**UI-10 July 2015:** UI-10 is one of the executives of the Development Education Network - Liberia (DEN-L), Gbargna City in Bong County. UI-10 is in her forties and has university as well as several professional credentials from both home in Liberia and abroad. She is charged with the day to day running of the activities of the organization, of which major among is enhancing the voices and participation of grassroots women and communities in the areas of peacebuilding, good governance and sustainable development through literacy training workshops and community awareness among women's groups and local communities.

**UI-11 July 2015:** UI-11 is one of the coordinators of the activities of Ganta Concern Women Development Association, Ganta City in Nimba County. UI-11 is in her forties and has been a leading personnel of the organization since 2004. She is concerned with the empowerment of women through education, community outreach, but most specifically agriculture programmes. She is also involved with tackling women, youth, and children's human rights concerns, addressing domestic and gender-based violence through training, counselling and advocacy projects, with the specific support and assistance of the organization's members.

**UI-12 July 2015:** UI-12 is one of the women in charge of ensuring the smooth running of Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), Gbargna City in Bong County, together with other grassroots members of the organization. UI-12 is in her forties with a level of basic secondary education. She organizes meetings (like the focus group discussion conducted with the organization's women) at the WIPNET Centre where they carry out their activities. Likewise, she works in collaboration with the women to empower women, young girls and their community through community outreach programmes, advocacy and awareness raising

on issues of rape, sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), and inheritance, some of which she plays lead role when advocacy is conducted through creative means like theatre act.

**UI-13 and UI-14 July 2015:** UI-13 and UI-14 are both members of WIPNET, Gbargna City in Bong County. UI-13 is in her fifties and UI-14 in her forties. Apart from their active involvement with the organization, both are farmers and trade part of their farm produce at the local market to sustain their families.

**UI-15 and UI-16 July 2015:** UI-15 and UI-15 are members of Ganta Concern Women, Ganta City in Nimba County. Both women are in their fifties, widowed and have been with the organization since 2005, especially in the organization's cassava agricultural project. Besides this, they are also small farmers and traders of farm produce to the running of their homes.

**FGD-A and FGD-B July 2015:** FGD-A and FGD-B, July 2015 are focus group discussions conducted with Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) in Bong County. As earlier explained, two focus groups were conducted with the same organization because of the turnout of members to participate in the discussion. FGD-A discussion was made up of *eleven (11)* members, and FGD-B discussion also constituted of *eleven (11)* members. These women are in the age groups of the forties to the sixties, and they are all involved in the realization of the peacebuilding activities of the organization, as profiled in "Appendix II" at the end of this study.

**FGD-C and FGD-D July 2015:** FGD-C and FGD-D, July 2015 are focus group discussions held with Ganta Concern Women Development Association (Ganta Concern Women) in Nimba County. Two focus group discussions were also held with members of this organization. FGD-C discussion constituted of *twelve (12)* members, and FGD-D discussion was held with *eleven (11)* members. These women are in the age groups of the forties to the sixties, majority of them are widows and are involved in the organization's peace and development activities, also profiled in "Appendix II:" at the end of this study.

The discussions and interviews carried out with the above participants were all audio recorded with their permission, and eventually transcribed. I enlisted the services of a research assistant and colleague, Tarnue Marwolo Bongolee. The medium of communication and discussion

with the participants was the English and Pidgin English (broken/hybridized English) languages spoken and used in everyday communication in Liberia. I am proficient in both languages, given that I hail from the Anglophone region of Cameroon, where the English language is an officially documented teaching and learning linguistic and Pidgin English is a lingua-franca commonly and extensively used in everyday communication in the region. At the level of the grassroots field engagements where some participants responded in the vernacular, the research assistant and some members in the group of participants translated the responses to English. The reason for holding four focus group discussions with just two organizations owe to the readiness of the women to share their experiences and the work they do, thus the sizeable turn-up for the discussion. To ensure the participation of all, I divided the discussion questions into two sections and also grouped the participants' as such. Apart from Mother Mary Brownell, who was interviewed at her home, all the other discussions and interviews took place in the participants' work environment, that is, offices and organizations' assembly centres throughout the month of July 01 to 31, 2015.

#### **4.6. Method of data analysis**

The use of primary and secondary data sources are generally relevant and credible forms of qualitative research studies. In analysing data collected, qualitative *content analysis* and *narrative/discourse analysis* of the role of women in building and influencing the outcomes of peace in (post-) conflict Liberia, was adopted for this study. *Content analysis* was situated within the specific contexts of the research questions and structured hypothesis. According to Hsieh and Shannon (2005: 1277) the procedure of content analysis constitutes a very important part of the qualitative research approach and is used to construe meaning from the context of the data text, be it primary or secondary. Thus, this data analysis method was distinctly used to analyse and appraise existing literature and the information gathered from the focus groups and interviews on the role and challenges of women in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture.

The study also made use of *narrative/discourse analysis*, otherwise known as storytelling. This form of analysis simply entails the experiences of the participants are understood narratively and presented as stories. This method of analysis is not new in the social sciences' disciplines,

and it builds on what Perecman and Curran (2006:146) epitomize as ‘letting the respondents tell their stories.’ According to Trahar (2013), the communication of the participants’ experiences through narratives is descriptively rich in the manner that it captures the meanings and brings out the voices and viewpoints of the participants just as it relates to their experiences. Research on Women’s Narratives (2007) expatiates on the power and significance of using narratives as a mechanism for presenting the stories and experiences of women. Through narratives, we recognize the unique nature of human experiences as captured by the ‘Women Peacemakers Program’ at Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice in the United States of America, which particularly encapsulates the context of women’s experiences of war and conflict, and their approaches to peace through narratives. The study on Women’s Narratives (2007) draws attention to the fact that the “actual power of a narrative is its potential to illuminate a social problem and create social change” and the narratives of women’s experiences in the pursuit of peace in Liberia, captures the essence of this power of social change.

Considering that this study aimed to ‘explore’ and establish the transformative profundities of peacebuilding processes and women’s roles therein in (post)-conflict, taking on the narrative approach, therefore, proved to bring out a true reflection of this. These narratives were grouped under the themes women’s individual peacebuilding agency and women’s organizational peacebuilding agency and strategies, which captured the periods spanning the fourteen years conflict in Liberia, as well as the post-conflict dispensation. In this context, the narratives descriptively represented the ‘what and how’ of the experiences of Liberian women in peacebuilding and the appraisal and analyses of them are the results, conclusion and the recommendations presented in this study to improve and deepen understanding of the transformative perspectives of both peacebuilding and the role of women.

#### **4.7. Ethical considerations**

Before engaging the process of data collection, a formal approval from the University of KwaZulu-Natal’s higher degrees ethics committee to proceed with the collection of data was obtained. Since all the women’s organizations used for this study are members of the umbrella organization WONGOSOL, my first point of contact was with WONGOSOL who provided

me with the gatekeeper's letter permitting me to carry out this research with its collaborating organizations and groups. Upon arrival in Liberia, I contacted by phone and emails all designated participants for this study to schedule appointments for the interviews and discussions. Following through the process of data collection with the participants, each interview and discussion began with me explaining the objectives of the research and seeking the voluntary and full consent of respondents, which was not a problem because all of them showed willingness to participate in the study. While, on the issues of anonymity and confidentiality, participants were assured that their names will be substituted with pseudonyms. This ethical concern is a sensitive issue in research, but given that the narrative of Liberian women peacebuilding experience has been severally interrogated and documented, the participants were not really keen on the ethical consideration of their identity, though they read and signed the consent form. In this given, Mother Mary Brownell consented for her name to be mention in the presentation of data. Meanwhile, the names of some of the other participants are not overtly mentioned in the presentation of date, but their portfolios or positions they occupy are profiled for easy deciphering of information. An important point to be noted here is that participants underscored the inevitable link of their responses on the women and peacebuilding subject in Liberia to those of their various organizations and institutions. The emphasis on this owes to the fact that most of what was discussed by participants are interlinked with the work they do for the organizations to achieve its objectives, especially in the current context of post-conflict.

#### **4.8. Limitations and challenges of the study**

The study set out to interrogate the role of women in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture in the context of (post-) conflict developments. Findings generated through field research engagement (as presented in chapters five to seven) proved quite relevant in addressing the research questions, filling the research gaps, substantiating the research hypothesis, and meeting the objectives of the study. This notwithstanding, the study was also limited by certain concerns. The first limitation pertains to the reality that empirical and qualitative data could not be collected from all stakeholders, women's organisations and individuals who were and are still visibly involved in Liberia's peacebuilding, reconstruction and development processes. This challenge owed to a number of factors, including the fact that I was constricted



by finances and time, as well as the unavailability of some sample population (for reasons which are explained in the last paragraph of this section) originally identified during the preliminary proposal development, presentation, and acceptance of this research study. In view of this challenge, I recognized that the sampling of such a small population is often perceived to have potential bearing on the finding of the study. The implication here is that the data collected, most often, do not necessarily represent the views of all the stakeholders. However, this challenge was dealt with by ensuring that the sampled population finally used for this study was reliable and representative of the wider perspective. This is in the sense that I focused on interviewing the projected target population available, as indicated in section 4.4 of this chapter. Additionally, the challenge relating to limited financial resources was to a large extent obviated through the benevolent award of a Doctoral Scholarship by the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Furthermore, I had some concerns about the fact that much attention had already been paid by other researchers to the women and peacebuilding discourse in Liberia, thereby over researching the target groups identified for this study. The implicit uncertainty in view of this possible limitation was that the responses of the participants or respondents maybe influenced by the many narratives and publications they have heard, read, repeatedly recounted, or conceived as what researchers researching on women and peacebuilding in Liberia maybe interested in. Addressing this, the interview questions were coined to address the gaps in literature and the target population accessed through WONGOSOL an umbrella secretariat organization that works with registered women's organizations in Liberia and knows their different peacebuilding areas of interests and activities. I also faced the challenge whereby some participants especially in the focus groups almost dominated the discussions. However, I set the pace for the discussion, ensuring that each participant was given room to also express their views.

Taking into consideration that the research derive(d) from a large body of secondary data covering a period of more than 20 years, not all the material and information on women and peacebuilding in Liberia could be sourced or said to be valid. For this reason, the study employed four of Scott's (1990:6) validity benchmarks, which are authenticity; credibility; representativeness; and meaning, to assess the quality of the data sources, and establish that

the data gathered was relevant, clear, and comprehensible. This is in the sense that I carefully analysed and assessed relevant secondary data and juxtaposed with some of the responses of participants as presented in the analyses chapters of this study. Moreover, since lessons to be drawn from the Liberian experience were envisioned to serve as references for other post-conflict situations, I noted the realism that each post-conflict setting and experience differ from the other. This is to say no one solution fits all, therefore the need to fashion the lessons and policies that maybe drawn from this study to be specific to each post-conflict milieu.

Other challenges for this study included, most notably, the outbreak of the Ebola virus in Liberia in 2014, which delayed the process of my field work for a year. Prior to the Ebola outbreak, I had informed most of the target population that interviews and discussions would be conducted in the months of November and December of 2014. While I constantly communicated via email with WONGOSOL the umbrella organization that provided me with the main gatekeeper's letter, I only succeeded to initiate the face to face data collection process in July 2015, following news of containment of the virus and cancellation of travel restrictions that had been placed on travels to and from Liberia. Arriving Liberia with initiatives and measures still ongoing to completely contain the Ebola crisis, I realized that data could not be collected from all the participants initially selected because some of them were quite engaged in the process. While, others could not avail for the interviews and discussions because they were directly or indirectly affected by the epidemic. Initially, I had anticipated focus group discussions with Sinoe Women Peace Network (SWPN) and South East Women Development Association (SEWODA), groups based in Sinoe County South-eastern Liberia, a region recorded in history as the most marginalized in the country. But upon arrival in Liberia, I was advised against traveling to this County because of the extremely bad road conditions, coupled with the fact that it was the rainy season and it would take days to travel there and back to Monrovia where I had lodged. Furthermore, I had at the very outset projected to interview more participants from all works of life relevant for the purposes of this study. This however was not realized, as most offices were preparing for the country's Independence Day celebration on July 26 in Sinoe County. As such, some of the interviews were slated for the month of August, in which case I was scheduled to leave Liberia on the last day of July 2018 and was also financially constrained to extend my stay. Notwithstanding

these challenges and limitations, supplementary telephonic and email communications for the purposes of clarifications were conducted in 2016/2017 with some of the research participants and the overall data collection process was effective and critically analysed to arrive at the findings of this study. Therefore, the inference that the limitation did not in any practical way undermine the quality or adversely influence the outcome and findings of this study.

#### **4.9. Conclusion**

This chapter focused on discussing the research methodology and design adopted for this study. Identifying the qualitative research methodology as the most suitable for a study of this nature, the chapter provided understanding on the research design; sources of data collection; the study's sample population, size, and sampling method; and how data obtained was construed and analysed to meet the objectives of the study. In this manner, the chapter detailed the study's use of diverse secondary and primary sources of data collection, and the identification of the target groups of participants using the method of purposive sampling, and the collection of data through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews, as administered by me. The chapter further highlighted how written transcriptions of tape recordings were used to capture and generate the data. And, qualitative content analysis and narrative analysis methods were used to interpret and analyse the data, as it relates to the discourse of the role and status quo of women as peacebuilders in Liberia and how they impact the post-conflict processes as women's organizations.

In addition, the chapter justified the methodology employed by the study. It also profiled the participants as the subject matter of the research, discussed ethical issues, as well as limitations of the study. Discussing the limitations of the study was an inevitable aspect of the research. This is because in the organization and analyses of any research that involves the adoption of a research method or methods, in this case qualitative research methodology to build and make meaning out of social phenomena using secondary or primary data, limitations are unavoidable. Justifying and explaining how the limitations were addressed, proved reflective of my understanding of the direction the study had to take, as well as my knowledge of how

to reconcile the methodological and field challenges in order to ground the study's objectives and arrive at key findings.

The chapter that follows is the first of the data analyses and presentations of the research findings chapters in this study. Seeing as the study is a critical assessment of women's role in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture, the chapter will focus on creating a deeper understanding of women and women's organizational experiences and approaches in influencing the (post-) conflict processes in Liberia.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# LIBERIAN WOMEN IN PURSUIT OF PEACE: EXPERIENCES AND APPROACHES OF WOMEN ORGANIZATIONS IN THE (POST-) CONFLICT CONTEXT

### 5.1. Introduction

For the past three decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there have been increased conversations about women's budding roles in leadership and decision-making structures of peace and security. For instance, platforms like the Beijing Conference in 1995 and UNSCR 1325 of 2000 happened at a time when Liberia was in the middle of conflict. Considering these agendas on the international table at that point, part of the Liberia's peace story involved multitudes of women, especially as they came to the realization of their worth and competencies to change not only the conflict situation, but the ramifications of the conflict on them and society. So, in more ways than one, women's interventions in the Liberian conflict, as argued in this chapter, curtailed to a certain degree its impact on families, communities, and society at large. Literature catalogues that women played very important roles at various levels and were 'resolutely and imposingly' part of the discussions for peace negotiations and resolution of the Liberian conflict. While this highlights the evolutionary trajectory of women's roles in Liberia, their quest for recognition and practical leadership in platforms of public decision-making and peacebuilding has remained a cross cutting leitmotif of the government, women's organizations, and UN agencies' post-conflict reconstruction and development agenda since 2003.

It is against this backdrop that this chapter presents narrative analyses of the roles, experiences, and approaches of women and women's organizations' pursuit of peace in the Liberian context. The chapter stimulates methodical discussions about women's agency and organizational contributions towards democratic consolidation, sustainable peacebuilding and reconstruction of Liberia, while also advancing the country's wannabe national development plan and agenda for transformation in line with agenda 2030 sustainable development goals. The organizations from which this chapter draws its discursive perspectives and rationalizations for women's peacebuilding roles, are those I purposefully

selected for this study. These include: Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL), the National Women's Commission of Liberia (NAWOCAL), the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding/Women in Peacebuilding Network (WANEP/WIPNET), Liberian Female Law Enforcement Association (LIFLEA), Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), Development Education Network—Liberia (DEN-L), Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET at the grassroots level), Ganta Concern Women Development Association (Ganta Concern Women), among the other appraised research population.

Women's distinct agencies and organizations' peacebuilding mechanisms<sup>43</sup> at the centre of post-conflict reconstruction and development in Liberia, are also unfolded in this chapter through summarized narratives. To further provide a nuanced perspective of women's experiences and approaches to peacebuilding in Liberia, the chapter draws accounts from the documentary "Pray the Devil Back to Hell"; discussions by peace activist - Leymah Gbowee, as indicated in the methodological chapter; and from scholarly works of authors like Erica K. Sewell (2007), Ilzina Lelde (2011), and Ali Mari Tripp (2015), on the discourse of women and peacebuilding in Liberia, among others. Through these presentations, the historical coming into being of women's organizations in Liberia and their journey to where they currently are at as peacebuilders is established. This way, the chapter elaborates how the rise of women to the forefront of Liberia's peacebuilding ventures builds from their experiences of conflict, defines, and addresses their practical and strategic gender interests. It also appraises the wide horizons of women's strategic interests that straddles their different networks of organizations in Liberia. The chapter equally examines the various policies and activities employed by these organizations to influence distinctive peacebuilding outcomes. In principle, the chapter addresses the inherent paucity of the oftentimes over generalization of women's peace roles, by communicating the individuality of their organizational significance and diversity of approaches.

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<sup>43</sup> As exemplified in the image in Appendix I on Liberian Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) – Activism for Peace

## **5.2. Women organizing for peace: the narratives and strategies**

Understanding women's roles as peacebuilders often build from their experiences of conflict. Conflict is a destructive and recurrent ensnarement for multitudes of people within and across the conflict borders, with the children and women populace bearing the exorbitant share of its adverse effects. Generally, in conflict situations, especially protracted cases, the quest for peace and stability often appear to be an almost elusive venture for many. However, it remains an achievable goal for women, who, as explained in chapter two on literature review, are challenged by the conflict situation and forced to re-evaluate their standing and traditionally defined roles in society. By re-thinking their roles in the shifting landscape of conflict, women through organizational groupings have and continue to mobilize, advocate, and empower actions for peace to meaningfully intervene in conflicts, Liberia being a case in point.

In Liberia, the conflicts took the form of civil wars, from 1989 to 1996 and 1999 to 2003. As recounted by respondent UI-3 (July 2015), women's interventions for peace started a year after the outbreak of the first civil war. Women's organizations, including the National Women's Commission of Liberia and its emergency arm - the Women in Action for Good Will; Liberian Women's Initiative; Women's Development Association of Liberia; Concerned Women of Liberia; and the Muslim Women Federation; were already active in the course of waging peace (UI-1, July 2015). However, Liberian conflict resolution and mediation processes from 1989 to 1997 excluded and failed to accord women their rightful place on the peace negotiations platforms, especially during the first civil war (UI-3, July 2015). Regardless of the odds, Liberian women demonstrated enduring resilience and a determined resolve in their course for peace, and eventually influenced an end to the conflict in 2003. Subsequent to Liberia's entry into the post-conflict state, women's roles in peacebuilding have been progressively characterized by increased activism as actors, stakeholders, architects, and contributors to peace and development under different women-led organizations at urban and grassroots levels.

Women organizing for peace: narratives and strategies chronicles the experiences of Liberian women, which propelled their organizational formation following the first conflict outbreak in 1989, through to 2003 and thereafter. As explained in chapter four, presenting real life



experiences through narratives captures a wider audience, and it is through such narratives that women's struggle for peace in Liberia succeeded to draw both local and international community responsiveness to the country's state of affairs. Additionally, the narratives of women's pursuit of peace in Liberia, just like in other parts of the world, transcend the apparent accounts of war and their plight therewith, to embody their agency for positive change and essence for peace. Bearing this in mind, the importance of analytical narratives appraising the roles Liberian women played during the fourteen years of conflict and peace history, are assertions of material knowledge and experience garnered from focus group discussions and interviews in Liberia. The narratives serve more as discursive tracks to three of the study's main research questions this chapter seeks to assay, which are:

- i. How instrumental were Liberian women and women's organizations in empowering the ends of peace in Liberia?
- ii. What interests and goals propel women's organizations for peace in Liberia, and how does the variation of these interests influence their approaches and outcomes to peace and reconstruction processes?
- iii. How has women's involvement in the Liberian peacebuilding and reconstruction processes impacted on the country's development in the context of post-conflict?

In response to these questions, the flipped margin of Liberia's conflict years, peace outcomes and the atmosphere of post-conflict, which encapsulates women's agency and organizational approaches is captured in the excerpt below.

“A window of opportunity for us women to consciously arise from our subconscious leadership and peace roles in society and grace the public scenes with our peace activism, taking the thought-provoking steps as need be to become beacons of peace in Liberia – is how we view and relate to some of the outcomes of Liberian conflict history (UI-3, July 2015 & UI-1, July 2015). This is not to say the hurt and pain of the conflicts and its devastating ramifications on us as women, children, men, and society at large is forgotten. Truth is, the Liberian conflicts immensely transformed the ideologies of our society's gender relations, norms and roles, and borne the increase realization that women like men also nurture the capacity to translate these conflict situations through their decisive politicking for peace (UI-3, July 2015; UI-1, July 2015; UI-6, July 2015; & UI-5, July 2015). Amidst the calamities of the Liberian conflicts and upheavals, our rise and

participation as women and women's organizations challenged the conflict dynamics and guaranteed a successful all-inclusive resolution to the conflict (UI-8, July 2015 & UI-9, July 2015). Through gathering for vigils and praying for peace; engaging dialogues with the government and fighting factions, and the international community; demonstrating in protest actions; organizing community meetings and seminars; among others, we the Liberian women defined our rally point, which was to influence an end to the conflict and ensure the return of peace, security and normalcy to Liberia (UI-1, UI-2, UI-3, UI-6, UI-8, and UI-9, July 2015; & FGD-A, FGD-B, FGD-C, and FGD-D, FGD-E, FGD-F, July 2015). Furthermore, the evidence of our empowering experiences of advocacy and participation, is the peace we were and are able to bring to our people, and this has continued to define our different purposes of engagement as we continually contribute to the reconstruction of Liberia through our organizational groupings."

From the data excerpt, the voices of women and women's organizations as active agents taking up various roles and adopting different strategies to address the conflict situation, are heard. One of the defining factors of conflict is the visible sign of change, seen in women's agency either individually or as groupings and organizations. Unearthing some of the main content and narratives of women's individual agency is therefore necessary for providing an understanding of the launch and proliferation of women's organizations in Liberia and their approaches to peacebuilding during and in post-conflict.

### **5.2.1. Women's individual agency in conflict times**

Owing to both the micro and macro factors of conflicts' impacts, especially on women, the decision and motivation to self-empower and start initiatives has been characterized as a given for women in most conflict societies. As noted in the literature review chapter, during Liberia's protracted conflict history, women had to take up new and varying roles as combatants, instigators, caregivers, household providers, and peacebuilders. Through the exercise of these roles, women defined for themselves a new arena of agency, especially in peacebuilding. Agency, the World Bank Report (2011) designates, refers to either an individual or a group's proclivity to make effective decisions, undertake operative actions, and transform them into expected or desirable outcomes. Goetz and Jenkins (2016) broadly perceive women's agency as another form of empowerment, whereby women are inclined to make choices and use resources to achieve desired outcomes. From these, women's agency in the context of this study is categorized as their ability to take advantage of the challenges

and opportunities of conflict/post-conflict situations and position themselves as decision makers, participants, contributors and architects of change. In considering women's individual peacebuilding agency in Liberia, probes are made on how their roles transformed and evolved overtime, how the conflict situation changed the representation of women in the public arena, and how involved women were in empowering the ends of peace. Related to this inquiry are narratives drawn from conversations with some of the research participants that show and relate the agency of Liberian women in the wake of the country's civil wars and beyond.

The subject of women's agency in Liberia parallels with the happenings of pivotal international events. For example, platforms like the Beijing Conference in 1995 and UNSCR 1325 of 2000 happened at a time when Liberia was in the middle of a conflict. Therefore, considering these agendas on the international table at the point, part of the peace story of Liberia automatically involved multitudes of women. According to UI-1 (July 2015), women's engagement in the state of affairs in Liberia at that time owed to the realization of their worth and competencies to change not only the conflict situation but its ramifications on them and society. More so, the realism of the social settings of the Liberian war environment, as in most conflict societies, was such that more men were reasonably targets of especially political opponents. As noted by UI-5 (July 2015), every time fighting intensified or the war situation worsened, the men and the adult boys had to go to the villages for months to get off the tracks of warriors or rebels. As a result, women were obligated to step into the prerogative 'men's role' and take charge of running most of the day to day socio-economic activities. Thus he related that:

In times of deteriorating conflict state, we, the men would stay in the villages in hiding with no formal jobs or means of subsistence to sustain our families. Because of this, women increasingly entered into economic activities like sales. In my case in particular, my mother had to play additional roles like fend for the family, risking to go to the market to buy food stuff and other products, and sell some just to provide us with the basics and essentials of life. So, the search for food, provision of basic necessities, and the preservation of family and society's sanity, technically and practically became the responsibility of women. This was a wide spread experience for many women and families during the years of conflict.

In advancing Women, Peace and Security, the United Nations (2002a:3) also notes the reality of conflict effects like the death or exile of men, and acknowledge that it activates women's intervention faculty and agency to shoulder responsibilities and take decisions on matters previously categorized as men's arena. Manchanda (2005:4737) further asserts that since the act of war and the pursuit of peace are gendered phenomena, women's inclined civilian (often pacific and participatory) and militarized agency is a given that is manifest through their expression of resistance and empowerment. Literature generally ascertains that the emergence of women's agency during conflicts is greatly provoked by the conflict ramifications. Recounting the Liberian experience, UI-5 (July 2015) elucidated:

The reality of women's victimization through widespread gender based violence, sexual harassment, and rape during the Liberian conflict upheavals to a great extent triggered the rise of women from their conventionally perceptive roles to embrace more proactive peacebuilding responsibilities (and provoked others to take up arms). This open shift in women's roles actually allowed them to unwaveringly pressure for access to decision-making processes and intervention in the conflict situation.

In this respect, Mother Mary Brownell<sup>44</sup> (UI-3 July 2015) during our interview at her home in Monrovia - Liberia, recounted how the civil war prodded her to take up an activist and peacebuilding role. Acknowledging how interlinked her agency as peace an activist/builder was with that of others and overlapped with the agencies of other civil society groups and organizations, Mother Brownell narrated:

The Liberia we live in today is thanks to the worth and fighting spirit in women. The conflict not only changed our political landscape of Liberia, but also the status quo of gender thoughts and experiences of its people, men and women alike, but especially women. In the immediate outbreak of the first civil war in December 1989, I asked myself what could be done to quell the conflict from escalating into what we had seen and heard about the Sudans and the DRC conflicts. But the fast spreading nature of the war and its devastating effects did not give me the space to think at length. So, I took

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<sup>44</sup> Appendix III particularly presents a full summary of Mother Mary Brownell's narrative and peacebuilding agency, which led to the formation of a women's pressure group. The Narrative titled 'Women Rising for Peace in Liberia' is her story 'A Peacebuilder's Narrative' as captured by myself. This narrative is written in acknowledgment and remembrance of Mother Brownell - a legendary peace activist, and it adds depth to the subject of women's individual agency and organizational approaches to peace.

direct and decisive stance to engage in meaningful action for peace and became actively involved in peacebuilding efforts from 1990.

Concerned about the general welfare of our people, Sheikh Kafumba Konneh and Archbishop Michael K. Francis and myself worked together tirelessly and founded the Inter-Faith Religious Council. With this initiative in place, we met almost on a daily basis at the Catholic Secretariat to plan strategies for peaceful intervention and resolution of the Liberian conflict. Likewise, I worked with other women where our focus was ‘an end to the conflict and peace for our people’. My first engagement with the women involved working with displaced women and children who lived in deplorable conditions in displacement centres, where we cared for them by providing food and trauma counselling from 1990 to 1994.

Burdened by the increasingly dire conflict state; the fact of our children being killed and forcefully recruited as soldiers; our women being raped, murdered, and majority becoming the breadwinners of their families; and our men being killed and forced into hiding; I conceived the idea of a pressure group as the best form of tackling the conflict and its consequences on our people and society. I shared this idea with the women I had been working with and we decided to send out mobilization messages to meet at the city hall. On the day of the meeting, the hall was packed with women from all works and backgrounds of life in Liberia. It was through this gathering that I eventually invited the women to my house, and we later in February 1994 formed the Liberian Women Initiative (LWI).

Literature, as earlier reviewed, generally holds that the politics of women’s roles and gender relations in society are bound to undergo significant shifts in the face of conflict realities, more so in this our contemporary times. The centrality of women’s agency as noted by Molyneux (2000) is often manifest in their abilities to establish movements through which their agency is exercised. So, reminiscing Mother Mary Brownell’s experience was substantiations concurring to Molyneux’s views, alongside the acknowledgement that there was a point of convergence between her career role as an educator and her agency to shoulder the responsibility of an activist, advocate and peacebuilder. The outcome of this was the creation of the LWI pressure group, which as later discussed, served not only as the voice for women’s popular activism that turned the clock of conflict Liberia’s first civil war towards the endpoint of peace, but also that which empowered and emancipated women to be leaders of change (UI-3 July 2015).

Adding to the women’s individual agency discourse, UI-6 July (2015) stated that agency as

actions, strategies and initiatives engendered by ordinary women, especially during conflicts, results from women's (in)direct experiences and concerns for the wellbeing of our families, fellow women and children, and society at large. To the coordinator of Ganta Concern Women (UI-11 July 2015) therefore, the activation of women's abilities in war times often resonates with their desire for peace and self-recognition as peacebuilders. In this frame of understanding, UI-1 (July 2015) in narrating her agency prided herself peacebuilder, as she specified:

“I love to see and define the person in me as a peacebuilder... I take joy in building peace through my daily living and my work... When people devote themselves to servicing others selflessly and risking their lives for the purpose of peace – relegating all other things to focus on the plight of women and children, and the welfare of the people, then I guess that person is a peacebuilder”.

The all-purpose self-identification and portrayal of women as peacebuilders has been well acknowledged in the literature as developing from their agencies. In her narrative, Madam Lorpu (UI-1 July 2015) described her agency as a devotion to the peace course, which began in 1990 as she navigated her way from the United States of America (USA) back to Liberia all in a spirit to help to contribute towards the restoration of Liberia back to a state of peace and security. Recounting her experience and drive for peace during our July 2015 scheduled discussion at her office in Monrovia, Liberia, UI-1 (July 2015) related:

“I left America November 1990 without my husband's blessings and I came back to Liberia during the heat of the war that started in December of 1989 and had by 991 covered most of Liberia. While my husband did not want me to come, I could not just seat in America and eat hamburgers and watch television every night and see the suffering women, children, and the larger part of the society were undergoing. I took my daughter and we left the USA to Ivory Coast in November of 1990. We tried entering Liberia from the Ivory Coast, but it was not possible at the time because of the war. So we fled to Sierra Leone and in January of 1991 boarded a fishing boat from Sierra Leone and we arrived at the Freeport of Monrovia on the second of January. Arriving Liberia, I work as a community mobilizer for Medicin San Frontier, where in joint efforts with other colleagues, we went around on the lookout for orphans and people who had been displaced. Through this medium, I came face to face with the plight of women who had been raped, abused, widowed. This propelled me to start engaging other women in discussions on how to mobilize our efforts to address and protect the interests of our

women, thus leading to my immediate involvement with the NAWOCOL upon its formation in 1991 till present.

The narrative of agency in the case of UI-1 (July 2015) is illustrative of her ability to self-sacrifice a comparatively socio-politically stable wellbeing and capacity to independently take decisions (leaving the USA and fleeing Ivory Coast to Sierra Leone and boarding a fishing boat...) to better engage in the pursuit of peace in Liberia. Rožič (2016:361) notes that the phenomenon of self-sacrifice is often stirred by crises and has different implications for the given situation. The ability to self-sacrifice as asserted by the individual and group research participants in this study was an experience consistent among and across Liberian women who defined for themselves new platforms of agency and sort peace in a wide range of capacities. Further remarks by participants about the outcome of women's agency conform to replete scholarships that it practically minimized the impact of the Liberian conflict on families, communities, and society at large. More so, earlier reviews in this study showed that literature on women's agency as it pertains to their undertaking of new roles, especially those previously typified men's domain, is revealing of the authority of ordinary women to negotiate and influence the conflict space, take initiatives on survival strategies, and forge peace.

From the fore-outlined, this study ascertains that a general trend of conflict is its ability to bring to light women's potentials and unique characteristics as interventionist peacebuilders or instigators/combatants as discussed in chapter two. The rise of women in search of peace in conflict situations has considerably increased in Africa, Liberia as a case in focus. Agency, as presented above and exemplified in the case of the Liberian experience, serves to justify the dynamics of the surge of women's organized drive and strategies to attain peace beyond the resolution of the conflict itself. This is to say that agency is an important determinant in women's assumption and definition of their peacebuilding positions as encapsulated in the presentation of the two narratives. Implicit from both narratives is also the reality that agency cannot be divorced from the rise and proliferation of women's organizations and increasing peculiarity of peacebuilding practices in the shaping and reshaping of Liberia's history. These narratives, as further expounded below appraise women's organized agencies and accentuate the distinctiveness of their organizational peacebuilding strategies in Liberia.



### **5.2.2. Women's organizations, peace agencies and strategies in conflict times**

The examination of women's resistance to wars transcends their individual agency and most importantly includes their organized resolves in emasculating the gendered nature of conflicts, often for the purposes of peace. This section presents analytical narratives and contributions of Liberian women's organizations to the country's peacebuilding architecture as it unfolded during conflict times from 1989 to 2003. However, before delving into this subject of women's interventions and approaches to conflict, note is taken that a historical brief on the materialization of women's organizations in Liberia is necessary for a vivid understanding of their agencies and strategies to restore Liberia to a state of peace and stability.

Endeavours at resolving conflicts and building peace often comprise assortments of strategies and initiatives targeting the direct or indirect management of the drivers of civil wars and their enabling factors. Recognizing that women are increasingly embracing the struggle for peace, there is no gainsaying that women's organizations have through their formation, risen up to the task. According to the research participants of this study, NAWOCOL and LWI<sup>45</sup> were among the first women's organizations to be founded in the early years of Liberia's conflict history. In essence, Mother Brownell, as did most of the participants acknowledged that the establishment of LWI represented a historic context of the upsurge of women's organizations and groups, and women rising for peace in Liberia in the immediate conflict outburst and post-conflict dispensation in Liberia. This view has also been asserted in the works of authors like Ali Mari Tripp (2015), Robert M. Press (2010), Erica K. Sewell (2007), William N. Massaquoi (2007), among others. Adding to these assertions, are allusions from research participants that the institution of LWI was practically fundamental in the remodelling of women's position and onus to carve new political agencies as peace advocates and architects of change through the medium of women's movements. According to UI-1 and UI-3 (July 2015), the voices of women were more powerfully expressed through women's groupings and collective actions as one. More so, society's transformation and women's empowerment was

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<sup>45</sup> LWI - Liberian Women's Initiative was not a sampled population for this study. However the founder of this organization – Mother Mary Brownell – was one of the participants interviewed for this study. The narratives of her conflict experience and agency are very much intertwined with that of the LWI, since it was under this organizational umbrella that her and other women strategized for peace in Liberia.

even more plausible under an organized and recognized canopy. Being one of the first women's organizations for peace during the early years of Liberian conflict, LWI signified a struggle for the rights of women to: take up leadership roles, become politically active, and participate in decision-making that prodded for peace negotiation to end the first civil war in 1996 (UI-3, July 2015).

However, 1999 to 2003 marked another phase of conflict that plunged Liberia back into the state of devastation, cutting through families, homes and communities. The undesirable ramifications of the first civil war, which pulled women together, also provided the basis for women's mobilization for the course of peace during the second civil war (UI-9, July 2015). Once again, the flipped side and irony of conflict, which Kumar (2000) identifies as one of the many reasons for women organizing, had provided women with the opportunity women to embrace and further expand their urgency and agency for peace. Developing the motivational platform that had been initiated by LWI for women to unremittably unite and work for peace at every level of society, a regional women's organization – MARWOPNET, was founded in 2000 by women from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, seeing as the conflict linked all three countries (UI-8, July 2015). Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) in Liberia was also launched in 2001 by a regional peacebuilding organization - West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP). Operative under the coordination of Leymah Gbowee, WIPNET comprised of women from all works, class, groups, ethnic and religious backgrounds, Christians and Muslims alike (UI-9, July 2015).

Understanding the fore-discussed development of women's organizations through Maxine Molyneux's organizational theory, she emphasizes that it is predominantly under the framework of women's movements that their interests, be it practical or strategic are best addressed through collective efforts or actions (Molyneux 2001). In concurrence, Butler, Ruane and Sastry (2015) maintain that the involvement of women's movements or organizations is an unquestionable element in the construction of women's agency and efforts to prevent/resolve conflicts and contribute to sustainable peace processes. These contentions resonated in the responses of research participants with further notations that the construction of women's organizational agencies and strategies to end the Liberian conflicts generally embodied the formulae of non-violence resistance. Some of these strategies included peaceful

demonstrations; advocacy campaigns and holding of sustained protests; addressing the humanitarian needs of the displaced people and the communities; lobbying and networking with other civil society institutions and organizations; keeping vigils and praying for peace; community awareness initiatives; attending conferences and peace talks; negotiating platforms for peace talks; sex strikes; and entreating rebels to surrender their arms. Interestingly, Sewell (2007) and Press (2010) in their studies also reiterate that women used non-violent public demonstrations, civil disobedience, and gathering for vigils and prayer crusades strategies to resound their quest for peace. Furthermore, Howard-Diawara and Cummings (2006) and Tavaana Institute (2014) assert that the approaches equally included empowering grassroots and marginalized women, and initiating platforms for conversations between rebel groups and divided conflicting communities, among others. Acknowledging that most of these strategies by women's organizations have a tendency to overlap and intersected across the different organizations, this study delimits them under the three categorization: advocacy campaigns; peaceful demonstrations; and attending conferences/dialogues and peace talks.

#### **5.2.2.1. Advocacy campaigns**

From the women's organizations interviewed, most of their peacebuilding agency and activism started with them mobilizing to advocate for an end to the Liberian conflicts and the restoration of peace. Advocacy, as defined by CAFOD (2014: 2), is an expansive term involving a diversity of activities that are undertaken either by an individual or organization(s) in representation of a person or a cause. It also entails actions to communicate opinions and stances with the aim of influencing transformation or outcome from the situation or people the action is directed at. In most conflict societies where women especially seek permanence in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts and in peace processes, advocacy and oftentimes practical intervention has been prime among their strategies. This is to say advocacy can be actioned in conflict situations, on conflict issues, and conflict sensitive advocacy can also be adopted as an approach to manage and prevent the causes and consequences of conflict, while capitalizing on the end goal of peace (CAFOD 2014: 2). Attaining this goal in the Liberian context, UI-1, UI-3 and UI-9 (July 2015) stressed that women's organizations at national (urban), grassroots, and regional levels had to engage in

multi-tiered advocacy campaign strategies. These among others included rising awareness, networking with both faith-based and civil society organizations, and lobbying and entreating leaders and rebels to dialogue and disarm. Recapping from talks with FGD-A, FGD-B, FGD-C and FGD-D (July 2015) at the grassroots levels, a generic point belaboured in their narratives was that:

As rural women of Liberia, they felt that at the beginning of the conflicts there was quietness on the situation, especially seeing as Bong County and Nimba County were not only the entry points of the insurgents in the outbreak of the first civil war, but also borne the severe brunt of both conflicts. One of the FGD-A participants related - ‘we saw first-hand the horrific effects of the conflicts in our lives and on our families and people. We became conscious of the need to advocate around the issues and effects of the conflicts. So as concerned women and mothers, we created awareness by gathering in groups, visiting households and talking to men and women, and boys and girls alike to rise up and protect their own, especially from sexually violations.’ Another FGD-D participant highlighted that with the loss of their livelihoods, women sometimes discussed incidentally how they could feed and sustain their families. Suggestions (especially those encouraging small business initiatives) that came out of these oftentimes informal discussions was, ‘as I reflect today’ our instinctive efforts at raising awareness and empowering women to survive, the participant stressed.

Women’s organized agency and course of action were also characterised by collaborative advocacy. This form of advocacy by women’s organizations, especially at the national level, entailed networking with religious institutions and other civil society organizations in Liberia - like the Council of Chiefs, the Inter-Faith Mediation Council, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, and the Muslim Women Federation. These bodies as noted by UI-3 and other research participants were all concerned about the future of Liberia as the challenge of conflict mounted and were also engaged in various efforts to minimise the conflict and drive negotiations to peace processes. Therefore, engaging in collaborative advocacy was for her (as the then leader of LWI) a prioritization of their advocacy for peace endeavours to magnetize a massive support base, develop, and coordinate strategies that would better influence affirmative and constructive responses for their cause. Furthermore, complementing advocacy campaigns were realized through NAWOCOL’s community awareness programmes, as detailed in the following data excerpt (UI-1 July 2015):

Using the emergency arm of our organization -'Women in Action for Good Will'- we identified women who were most affected by the war and had lost all or almost everything. And looking at the tribal inclination of the war, our activities therefore involved bringing women from different tribal groupings, especially women whose tribes were primary targets of the conflicts, like the Krahn tribe from which the assassinated President Samuel K. Doe hailed, the Gio, Mano and Mandingo tribes. With these women being our primary focus, we rallied around individuals and institutions, advocating and raising consciousness for the need to support and provide relief services and basic needs for these women.

Further embarking other community awareness programmes, we held several formal and informal gatherings and sermonized the message of forgiveness and reconciliation to people in various communities. We targeted working with women from communities where tensions and strained relationships were high. These included engaging women in the Nimba County - where the Gio and the Mano were against the Mandingo, and the Grand Gedeh County the - where the Krahn were against the Gio and the Mano. We ensured women in these communities were fully involved in advocating the need and importance of forgiveness, since most of them had in one way or another shouldered the burden of the conflict or suffered the loss of loved ones. Our awareness messages echoed pronouncements like 'let bygones be bygones, let's work on forgetting and forgiving, let's pull our energy together to live as sisters and brothers and move ahead in building our communities...' As women seeking to empower women and build peace, urging this consciousness for individuals and populations to be reconciled was and remain for us as an organization the only way through which peace and development would occur, as we could not and cannot separate one group from the other and expect progress.

Molyneux's organizational theory underlines the collectiveness of actions in search for a shared goal, while also noting the diversity of experiences and interests that propel organizations to engage in activism. Hence, understanding women's organized agency in conflict times entwines with the cause or people for whom their strategizing is aimed to influence, as well as the desired outcome which though maybe a common goal, is achieved using distinctive components of same or different approaches. Particularizing on this individuality, UI-1 (July 2015) specified that the ability of most Liberian women's organizations (NAWOCOL as an example) to advocate its cause and reach a broad spectrum of the society during the conflict times owed to its mechanism of placing women at the centre and valuing them as vital instruments of positive transformation.

Across the continuum of participants interviewed, the study distinguished that the precise use of lobbying mechanism to particularly influence political leaders was one of the advocacy strategies employed by women's organizations during the Liberian conflict. With specific reference to the second civil war and its dire national and regional impacts, MARWOPNET as stated by UI-8 (July 2015) lobbied and got the presidents of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea to convene. This is because some factors triggering the conflict in Liberia were rooted in these participating countries, thus the realization by women that the only way to peace was through petitioning and influencing the positions of the leaders to resolve the cross-border crisis and rancour. Cataloguing this strategy as a joint regional effort and making reference to the organization's records, UI-8 explained that:

The lobbying exercise was led by Mother Mary Brownell and Ruth Perry, who presented the women's concerns about the plight of the children and citizenry of Liberia suffering as a result of the gruesome conflict. Petitioning with the leaders to give heed to them as their mothers and sisters, MARWOPNET finally convinced the presidents of these three countries to attend the regional peace dialogues that convened in Rabat, Morocco in March 2002.

It is important to acknowledge that women's ability to sway the perception of leaders in the said context was also indicative of their resolve to communicate the cause for which they advocated in a manner that captured the attention of some of the decision makers by some means. This agency, otherwise referred to as lobbying is described by Miller (2011:6) as a "communicative process", which may or may not in every circumstance trigger political or policy considerations. In the case of Liberia, the lobbying by MARWOPNET indubitably propelled the platform for dialogue. Furthermore, participants from women's organizations enunciated that their exercise of the lobbying mechanism also factored the aspect of soliciting and entreating rebels, since ensuring inclusivity in conflict resolution processes was for them an imperative for peace as the ultimate outcome. Recapitulating from her experience of the first civil war, UI-3 recounted:

In our numerous efforts for peace, we tried to and in some instances solicited the audience of militants and leaders alike. For example, about ninety of us women of LWI gathered at some point and travelled to Bomi County to dialogue with the warlords. More than half way to the Bomi Hills, we were stopped by armed militants at the Po River Bridge who refused us further entry to the militant camps. This however did not

derail our purpose for peace, as we continued to plot the course to engage conflict parties to dialogue ending the hostilities for the purpose of peace and stability.

Tripp (2015), in her book 'Women and Power in Post-conflict Africa', also captures women's struggles for peace and shared experiences in Liberia that included efforts to by individual women and community leaders to entreat combatants, documenting that:

“Women talked to their brothers and sons fighting in the conflict in their various languages to put down the guns. They took food to warring factions and made attempts to persuade them from fighting. They carried to them different items, including: white chickens - which was a replacement of white doves, an emblem of peace; kola nuts, which reminded the fighters that women gave them life; and palm branches, which embodied the welcoming of Jesus to Jericho, meaning they are welcome to disarm and return back home” (Tripp 2015: 97-98).

From the fore considerations, field interviews, and focus group discussions, it is implicit that advocacy around the Liberian conflict situations was a strategy rooted in the establishment and everyday works of women's organizations. The *raison d'être* for this owed to their commitment to call attention to the devastating effects of the conflicts on women and society at large, the need for change and women's voices to be heard. In further assuming the responsibility for peace, women's agency from both primary and secondary literature perspectives also roped in the strategy of peaceful demonstrations.

#### **5.2.2.2. Peaceful demonstrations**

Demonstrations can either be non-violent or violent activism for a cause. While largely regarded as a public activity, it can also be private depending on the intended cause or target group to be influenced. Focusing on the element of peaceful demonstrations, this study underscores that it is a form of non-violent resistance activism by a group or commune of people asserting a standpoint on public issues, and in the context of this study, a method of popular politicking especially in situations of conflict. Explaining this exercise, Hobsbawm (2003:73) defines mass demonstration as “participation in a collective activity involving bodily experience, intense emotion, and physical action - like marching, chanting slogans, singing - through which the merger of the individual in the mass, which is the essence of the collective experience, finds expression at a time of great public exaltation”. Drawing responses from focus group discussions (FGD), participants alluding to the Liberian conflict



experience averred that peaceful demonstrations remain one of the mechanisms used by and associated with women's organized agency for peace to navigate the conflict space, negotiate an environment of peace and stability, and address the victimization and marginalization of women brought about by conflict occurrences. From the views of the participating women's organizations interviewed for this study, peaceful demonstration was a widely used strategy by women during Liberia's conflict times. Speaking of this approach in the light of LWI activism, UI-3 related that:

In deliberating strategies to end the Liberian conflict, we the women adopted as one of our activism formulae peaceful demonstrations. Engaging this action, we paraded, rallied, and demonstrated in front of embassies, government offices and on streets to ensure our predicaments as women fighting for peace echoed to all parties concerned. Also, we were always at the picketing lines with placards and banners that carried different messages for peace. Our voices echoed even as we marched up to the stations and the quarters of the warlords chanting 'we want peace not war; we are your mothers and sisters; stop the fighting, the rape of our girls, the killing of our children, sisters, brothers and husbands and let peace reign'.

Generally, the act of demonstration constitutes different aspects that can be actioned by way of sit-in strikes, picketing, sex strikes, marches, stripping naked protest, and rallies. These forms of popular activism are not ephemeral and are often employed in the fight for different causes, spanning the political, economic, social, and development. Analysis of women's organizational agency and approaches in relation to their search for peace in Liberia draws attention to the narrative that women orchestrated peaceful demonstrations<sup>46</sup> during both civil wars in Liberia. For example, WIPNET's engaging strategy was their capitalization on the numerical potency of women (UI-9 July 2015). The empowering impact of this numeric advantage as asserted by Howard-Diawara and Cummings (2006), Tavaana Institute (2014:3), and corroborated by UI-9 as well as other research participants, was that it stimulated women's competency to rally around matters of importance and urgency as a dependable conduit through which they could partake and influence peace and decision-making to end the civil war in Liberia. Marshall and Hayward (2011:7) make more noticeable

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<sup>46</sup> Appendix I: Liberian Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) is a picture that speaks to one of such demonstrations where women's activism for peace is captured in the messages written on the placards that not only reflect, but tell a story of their organizational agency.

the fact that one of WIPNET's appealing catchphrase used during their demonstrations and gatherings was - 'Does the bullet know a Christian from a Muslim? According to UI-9, the mix of action and the general use of emblematic slogans espoused by women in demonstrations occasioned their considerate/selfless engagements and unity for a purpose that surpassed the religious divides.

Appraising demonstration-oriented strategies, particularly through the nuance lens of 'peaceful', the tendency often is the simplistic observation that being non-violent entices the platform for warring factions to consider mediation and that it activates women's access in peace processes. Both historic and contemporary perspectives hold that this assertion is to a degree true, in that, such strategies used by women to navigate the conflict space at the informal levels have in many instances served as the blueprint of finding the middle ground (Amedzrator 2014:3). Drawing from women's experiences in Liberia, the narratives hold that after the successful lobbying and meeting of leaders in Morocco in 2002, the conflict landscape in Liberia instead worsened by 2003. Not only did this drive women to further marshal and strengthen their fight for peace, but also resulted in the launch of the non-violent campaign for peace in March 2003 under the WIPNET Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace<sup>47</sup> movement. Using the lens of Molyneux's organizational theory that highlights the exercise of collective action in reaction to common challenges and interests (Molyneux 2001 & 1985), the understanding is that the debut of the Mass Action for Peace Movement was a matter of agency to seek the shared goal of peace. This sentiment is captured in Leymah Gbowee's recount that:

"By 2003, we were fade up with the war, the abuse, our daughters being raped, our children being recruited as child soldiers and the ills of Taylor. So a group of community women gathered together and decided enough is enough. For us, the price of seating was getting higher than the price of getting involved. We had been pushed so far back that we had to decide to step out and leave a legacy. We had seen the worst that awaken

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<sup>47</sup> As was with the first conflict, the women of Liberia could not seat and watch a replay of same destruction, mayhem and inhumanity in the second conflict, thus the need of this pressure group movement which was established by Leymah Gbowee, Asatu Bah Kenneth, Vaiba Flomo, Janet Bryant-Johnson, Etty Weah and Etweda Cooper (Pray the Devil Back to Hell, 2009). The Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace was a combination of different groups like WIPNET-WANEP, LWI, MARWOPNET, the Muslim Women Association and the Christian Women Association, and the Association of Female Lawyers in Liberia (AFELL), among others (Alaga 2011: 23).

the power in us. Daily we protested at embassies, picketing, sending letters, using media forums to fight for peace, gathering at the market place to demonstrate and pray. In desperation, we added the sex strike...and uttered severally 'if I should get killed, just remember that I was fighting for peace.' (Leymah Gbowee 2011) ...”

From the responses of individual women participants and those in the focus group discussions (FDG), it is understood that praying as a method of peaceful demonstration was and remains an operative form of protest. According to UI-12 and UI-9 (July 2015), praying paved an arena for women to further define their identity as holders of human and civil rights and architects of peace. Besides, the fact of such demonstrations being non-violent endeavours widened the numeric capacity of women's struggle for peace, as both genders and people from all backgrounds and works of life actively participated in praying and fasting for the peace cause. In addition to this, the study imperatively noted that the basis of the Mass Action for Peace activism particularly gave an impetus to heightening the empowerment of women at all levels of society in Liberia. At the level of the grassroots to be specific, focus group discussions' participants detailed that it kindled women's agency to seize the opportunity and unwaveringly partake in the struggle for peace. In the words of Leymah Gbowee (2013):

“Women from the grassroots rose to the struggle and in three months of our campaign, we had over ten thousand women in fifteen locations in Liberia supporting the cause and saying 'No to war and Yes to peace.' The power we saw in ourselves as women from all backgrounds of life, especially from the rural and grassroots setting - 'the market women and the peace women in white T-shirt' as we were popularly known; is something - an experience and a benefaction that cannot be described.” With this massive support base we were also able to send some of our women to Ghana to rally our fellow refugee women residing in there. This was just before the 2003 defining peace talks. And when the talks eventually commenced, we the women with the support of other women from the region held our placards and chanted outside the meeting venue.

Following an analytic line of thought, it is trite to establish that the assertive potential of women's demonstration for peace in Liberia was manifested using different mechanisms. Literatures (Tripp 2015, Gbowee 2011, Alaga 2011, Massaquoi 2007, etc.) that draw attention to some of the strategies used by women's organizations in Liberia also allude to this. Focusing on the aspect of sex strike as one of the demonstration mechanisms, Disney and Reticker (2009) in the documentary *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, elucidate that it was an exercise of power and reason whereby Christian and Muslim women alike agreed to refuse

their men sexual pleasure. This exercise served to authenticate women's seriousness for the peace cause and appeal to the faculty of men to also take responsibility for their part in the conflict and join the struggle for peace. Apparently, the sex boycott is a form of nonviolent protest and resistance that dates to ancient times (de Romilly 1985:87). Women, most especially, have continued to use it in the contemporary to bring about an end to: social injustices; advocate their cause; and propel decision makers and leaders to take seriously addressing political, socio-economic and security challenges that confront women and often society at large. From the Liberian experience, this exercise, obligated the men to join the struggle for peace alongside the women, cognizant that an end to the conflict also meant an end to the abstinence (Disney and Reticker 2009).

A convergence of considerations from participating women's organizations directed that the act of stripping naked also constituted another form of peaceful demonstration strategies by Liberian women in the struggle for peace. Stripping naked is a non-violent mechanism where nakedness is used as an instrument of power to protest against perceptible injustices (Tamale 2016; Prasch 2015). What's more, the body of a woman is said to signify motherhood as a 'producer and reproducer' of both genders in society, a caregiver and upholder of culture and nationhood (Tamale 2016:20). Therefore, for men to publicly see the nakedness that symbolized motherhood was/is to repudiate that life (Prasch 2015: 195-196). Narratives of the Liberian experience convey that during one of the impasses at the 2003 peace negotiations in Accra, Ghana, Liberian women threatened to strip bare if a negotiated settlement for peace was not arrived at. Undressing in this given was an act, which denoted women were willing to sacrifice all shred of their dignity to humiliate the delegates, if delegates did not hint to the weightiness of their request for peace (Pray the Devil Back to Hell). So, in Liberia as in other African cultures, tradition discerns that a mother or an elder woman's deliberate stripping in public as a sign of protest in front of men, especially those young enough to be their sons, was/is purportedly a curse to the men (Prasch 2015; Tamale 2016).

Building on the context of peaceful demonstrations, this study established that protests and marches, especially by organized women's group in Liberia gained wide spread support and prominence nationally, regionally and internationally. Likewise, the study noted that while such movements or demonstrations against wars are often said to begin in small peace activist

groups, the phenomenon was quite different in the case of the Liberian second civil war in terms of the mass action by women. In consort with most conflict situations, women's agency for peace in Liberia also took on another trajectory of attending conferences and peace talks.

### **5.2.2.3. Attending conferences/dialogues and peace talks**

Historical as well as contemporary conflict and peace discourse recognizes the strategy of organized caucuses as one of the mechanisms used by women to create an empowering environment for their engagement and participation in influencing efforts at peace negotiations. Across the spectrum of research participants in Liberia, narratives of advocating for meetings and dialogues, attending conference and peace talks, was also reiterated as being part of the recurring strategies used by women in their organization, search, and struggle for peace. As earlier noted in the literature review chapter, women's access and participation in formal peace processes and negotiations remain a challenge in the practice of peace operations (see: Reimann 2014 & Kvinna till Kvinna 2011). However, this does not and did not, as is with the Liberian experience, deter women from securing and shaping the dynamics of peace negotiation processes to end the Liberian civil wars. Accounts by UI-1 and UI-3 (July 2015) summarized that, in efforts to navigate the conflict space and influence an arena of peace, the women of Liberia developed a culture of consensus building, organized meetings, and attended peace negotiations even under observers' status. Elaborating on this, UI-3 recounted thus:

One of our many strategies for peace and for our voices to be heard as women of Liberia, involved efforts to attend conferences and peace talks. Hence, each time conferences that focused on Liberia in any African region were organized, we mobilized and sought support to purchase travel tickets and attend the talks, even though we were never invited. Encouragingly, our support came from men and women alike. In one incident, we the women of LWI arrived Accra, Ghana in 1994 for one of such conferences and were told - 'this war is not for women', and our response was...but we bear the brunt of it...so it is also women's war. It was ridiculous when the warlords stopped us from entering the conference hall saying we were not part of the process, UI-3 related...and noted...but we were not deterred.

We used the media outlet and implored the rebel delegates on the spot, asking if they would let their mothers and sisters come all the way here and be refused to participate in a conference that had to discuss the reality of the situation they were all living in?....At

last we were allowed entry under the status observers only. According to the warlords, we were supposed to remain quiet, but then they kept referring back to us, asking our opinions on the deliberations and decisions of the meeting. This was quite remarkable and most importantly signified that we the women of Liberia were making progress in our quest for peace. Following from this, we made our presence felt in all the peace conferences...and this was irrespective of the fact that we received no official invitations to attend these events. Our mission was not to relent in our peace efforts until the guns were silent.

Assembling for conferences and dialogues is one of the many ways through which women's involvement in peace processes occur (UI-6 July 2015). Speaking of the importance of conferences and dialogues, UI-5 and UI-2 asserted that the holding of the United Nations Women in Beijing Conference in 1995 gave the women of Liberia a voice of motivation, a consciousness to strive on and work as a united force. Therefore, reviewing the experiences of women's pursuit of peace in Liberia, discernment of why meetings and dialogues were a necessary approach to attending their goal builds on the fact that through such fora, women were able to brainstorm; share and analyse their experiences; draw on different propositions and work together to accomplish the peace cause. Lelde (2011: 18) acknowledges that women's activism for peace in Liberia also included requests to engage President Taylor in dialogue and streaming to the parliament with demands for a space for conversation to be granted. According to women the audience with President Taylor in April 2003 was a significant moment in women's struggle for peace in Liberia. Women came out in their numbers, dressed in white for the meeting, and in the statement presented by Leymah, women patently stated:

“We, the women of Liberia, including the IDPs, are tired of war, we are tired of running, tired of begging for bulgur wheat, we are tired of our children being raped. We are now taking this stand to secure the future of our children because we believe we are custodians of our society and tomorrow our children will ask us: “Mama, what was your role during the crisis” (Pray the Devil Back to Hell 2009).

It is important to highlight that this proclamation, as described by Tripp (2015:99), was in effect the market women's open and justifiable demand for the immediate ceasefire and peaceful dialogue between the government and warring factions. Several reports and documentations detail how President Taylor challenged the women to locate rebels and bring them on board to dialogue, as his pre-condition to participate in peace talks and ceasefire



agreements. Research by Sewell (2007: 17), Lelde (2011: 18), and Tavaana Institute (2014: 10) maintain that women took on this challenge, went across borders to Sierra Leone, and convinced the rebels to come on board. This was the breakthrough in women's activism for the resolution of the conflict and peace that set the space for the Accra, Ghana peace talks, which commenced on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2003. As observed by this study, the strategy of women meeting with Taylor and the warlords served as an indicator to the world that there is power in the voices of women, which not even the gendered nature of the conflict and patriarchal display of society could/can suppress. This also reverberated the message that the women of Liberia were indeed tired of the killings and unrest; and having taken these significant strides to do the inconceivable, simply meant they would do it again. This position was severally reasserted by research participants and by Leymah (2011 and 2013) as articulated in the below data excerpts:

“WIPNET attended peace talks in Accra, Ghana in June 2003. The talks which were to last for two weeks, lasted for 3 months. With the talks in progress and weeks before they were ever even concluded, President Charles Taylor had been indicted for crimes against humanity by the International Criminal Court. Abandoning his peace dialogue table and his delegation in Ghana, he fled back to Liberia. This however did not dissuade us the women from our mission to ensure the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Liberia. Working in collaboration with our women counterparts in Ghana and other women's organizations like MARWOPNET and Women's NGO Secretariat of Liberia, among others, WIPNET released statements airing their worries about the continuing violence and unrest in Liberia, and the need for further intervention in the state of affairs by the United Nations. The impasse of the peace dialogues coupled with the news that the conflict had taken the turn for the worst, and a missile had landed in the American compound in Liberia where the displaced people were being housed, was the defining moment for WIPNET women. Angered and provoked by this news, Leymah articulates - 'I went into the hall and told the women to lock arms for we are putting this venue under siege, and must ensure that no food or water is served and no factions, mediators and negotiators live the hall until a peace agreement is reached and signed. Accused of impeding justice by blockading the hall, the security forces came to arrest me and threatened to make it easy for them to strip naked. And as I pulled off my scarf, they immediately retreated.' What followed two weeks after on August 18, 2003 was the pronouncement and the signing of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), and the appointment of Gyde Bryant to chair the Transitional Government of Liberia” (Leymah Gbowee 2011 and 2013).



From the extract, it is worth noting that the intersection of women's organized strategies in their pursuit of peace was rife and strategic for the eventual resolution of the conflict. More so, their peace advocacies and crusades were backed by Clergies and Imams alike, and broadcasted by the Catholic radio station - Radio Veritas, the BBC and CNN news outlets (Tavaana Institute 2014:9; Tripp 2015:99). As was the case with LWI, WIPNET was also accorded only an observer status during the peace negotiations in Accra in 2003. However, history records some of the outcomes of women's activism during the first civil war to include, the appointment of one of the women's Muslim activists - Ruth Sando Perry - in 1996 to oversee the National Transitional Government's legislative and presidential elections that took place in 1997. Apparently, this success was symptomatic of the significant strides that women's organizational agency and strategies were contributing towards ending the conflict. According to UI-3 (July 2015), it was through these earlier actions and resolve to influence peace negotiations that LWI and collaborating organizations in the ECOWAS region laid the groundwork for women's agency by advocating for their involvement and participation at formal peace dialogues and decision-making at all levels. One of the conspicuous yields of this endeavour, as stated by Massaquoi (2007:78-79) and Tripp (2015:100) was that women delegates selected from the Liberian subdivision of MARWOPNET and headed by Sando Perry and Theresa Leigh-Sherman to honour ECOWAS' invitation, were able to secure seats at the Accra negotiating tables. As representatives of the wider women body during the peace dialogues, MARWOPNET was ultimately endorsed as an official signatory to the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreements (Marshall and Hayward 2011: 7; Tripp 2015: 100). For its interventionist strategies, acclaimed role as regional peacebuilders at all levels of the society, and agents of socio-political change, MARWOPNET received the distinguished 2003 United Nations Award for Human Rights (Sewell 2007:18; Massaquoi 2007: 73).

It is a documented fact the Accra peace agreement signalled the official end of Liberia's 14 years of civil war and was welcomed as a milestone achievement by many, especially women. In essence, the agreement happened just few months into WIPNET's non-violent mass campaign for peace, and the message 'we want peace', which had been resonated throughout women's pursuit of peace in Liberia, was achieved. Leymah Gbowee (2013) however recalls that some of the sentiments after the peace deal included common perceptiveness that women

would just lay back since they have achieved the peace they wanted. Contrary to this view, the second phase of real activism by women to influence the reconstruction and development processes in the post-conflict and meaningfully intervene in the political affairs of Liberian nation-state had just begun, and the confidence in their ability to lead and impact change was immeasurable. Alaga (2011: 14) substantiates that women did not just settle for the sheer ideology of peace as the absence of war following the 2003 peace deal, but took upon themselves the responsibility of consulting with the stakeholders on their various role in the implementation of the Accra agreement. Through these arrangements, women objectivized their activities; conceived operationalization timeframes; and encouraged fellow women, especially from the grassroots and rural Liberia to not relent in their efforts at ensuring the sustainability of the peace they have all worked so hard to achieve (Alaga 2011: 14).

An assessment from the fore-discussed excerpts and analyses of women's organizational agency and strategies convey that the role of women's organizations was indispensable in the resolution of the Liberian conflict. In view of this, it is observed that if women's agency for peace propelled their strategies to navigate and transform the conflict space and achieve their immediate goal, then Molyneux's organizational theory provides the basis for understanding how and why of women's collective action (see: Molyneux 2001 - *Analysing Women's Movements*). Besides, deciphering from Molyneux's practical and strategic gender interests standpoint, peace as the absence of war and beyond emerges as a vital component, foundational for realizing women's practical and strategic interests and society's development at large. From this, it becomes critical to recognize that women's organizational agency as peacebuilders has remained integral in advancing the consolidation and implementation of peacebuilding, reconstruction and development agenda in post-conflict Liberia.

### **5.2.3. Women's organizational roles and approaches in the post-conflict**

Building peace in post-conflict societies is a convoluted responsibility, an undertaking that is often accomplished by different stakeholders and actors, and in the case of this section of the study, women and women's organizations in Liberia. Often considered intrinsic in the undertaking of post-conflict peace, reconstruction and development agendas, are fundamental concerns of effective implementation of processes that are inclusive, systematically and

structurally sustainable. However, as reviewed in literature, while the question of inclusiveness is gradual, countries transitioning from conflict to peace have and continue to hinge considerably on effective women's interventions in the processes. Noting that women's involvement in (post-) conflict agendas had not been a clear-cut matter until the passing of UNSCR 1325 (though implementation remains slow), what is of importance is the determination and agency displayed by women to be part of the processes, as illustrated in their narratives above. Exploring the experiences of women's organizations in Liberia, the study advances from the premise that:

Women's peacebuilding efforts, even and especially in the aftermath of the Liberian conflict substantiates the context of their autonomy to involve in decision-making that intersects between their universal human and civil rights to participation; experiences of conflict and post-conflict; and socio-economic, political, security, and development interests.

The determination of women's organizations in promoting peace, reconstruction and development agendas, advocating for women's rights to equal participation in decision-making and leadership, empowering and protecting women's interests locally and nationally, is unwavering. At the helm of women's resolve for peace and security, is also the continuous efforts on their part to build capacity that will allow them to participate in the processes. Building capacity entails engagement in a wide variety of activities and trainings. It is a process meant to support the ability of people or defined population to collectively work for their common goals, interests, and benefits (Maiese 2005). Attaining this involves skills training and the provision of necessary tools and knowledge to target groups to assist them delineate perceptive problems and challenges and devise ways of defusing and responding to them, as outlined in the preceding sections on agency. Therefore, understanding how capacity building strengthens women's participation and role in post-conflict security sector reform and transformation; justice and reconciliation; socio-economic well-being; and governance and participation processes, is rather the aim of this section. Certainly, Liberian women's interventions in the affairs of the country are vital for its national reconstruction goals. As explicated in the literature chapter, these goals, as in the post-conflict activities, are key to reviving and strengthening state and society's capacity and institutions for consolidating durable peace. Therefore, examining the implementation of these activities in post-conflict

Liberia, an inquest into the contribution and impact of women's organizations therein is explored.

#### **5.2.3.1. Women and security sector reform in post-conflict Liberia**

Security sector reform or transformation involves a diversity of activities, including genderized disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR); reinforcing civilian governed military that is inclusive of both men and women; professionalizing security and armed forces, and strengthening the rule of law in the implementation of all these programmes (Bastick and Whitman 2013:6). Basically, SSR encompasses the adoption and implementation of robust and clear-cut national defence and security policies, as well as firearm laws. Undertaking this security reform is pivotal to post-conflict recovery processes, and the failure of states, institutions, and societies to address these issues, especially the DDR of ex-combatants, often present a high risk of relapse into conflict and the elusiveness of peace (Gariba 2011).

The DDR as Bastick (2008:2) specifies, must be representative and inclusive of women in order to ensure operative and accountable security sector transformation that likewise address their needs and interests. Ultimately, civil society including non-profit organizations, movements, groups and associations are in the main considered as significant role players in the management SSR programmes. According to Bastick and Whitman (2013:7), civil society poses the potential to influence these security processes by undertaking a multiplicity of roles. These may vary from assisting in the formulation of policies and new programme initiatives; overseeing and monitoring the processes; contributing to information and training activities; facilitating negotiations and the process of information flow between national security sector actors and the local communities; and offering security services to and within communities.

Literature encapsulating the period of Liberia's first civil war up to its episodic resolution indicate that women were quite vocal on the issues of DDR (Anderlini 2000; Massaquoi 2007; MacCarthy 2011; Tripp 2015). For example, LWI and its collaborating women's groups implored stakeholders to keep to their part of the peace bargain and disarm before the 1997 elections. Employing anew the strategy of entreating rebels as an established exercise, they mobilized women from all over the country to engage rebels at the different arms collection

outlets and entreat with them to hand over their weaponries. As a result, an approximated 80% of the weaponries had been collected by 1996 (Anderlini 2000); and further estimated 74% disarmed and demobilized by February 1997 (Jaye 2010:6). In light of this progress, Massaquoi (2007:69) expounds that the holding of the 1997 elections was possible because the transitional government of Ruth Sando Perry had to an extent succeeded in disarming some of the combatants.

Previewing the importance of women's roles in SSR and mindful of the adverse consequences of their marginal representation in the DDR processes pre to post 1997 developments in Liberia, women, subsequent to the CPA in 2003 resolved to undertake the vital stance of ensuring the practicalization of the DDR processes. In the framework of women's role in these processes, the women of WIPNET's determinedly assumed the position of implementers of the Accra peace agreement (Bekoe and Parajon 2007). Despite this impetus to ensure stakeholders' adherence to the terms of the agreement and their recorded abilities to persuade rebel commanders to convene for the peace dialogues, women remained unequally represented<sup>48</sup> in the DDR processes. Undeterred and even more resolute in their position, women proceeded to set the scenes for facilitating and realizing the implementation of the agenda for arms control and disarmament, as recounted by Leymah Gbowee (2013) that:

“Not only were we mobilizing and empowering women to take upon the responsibility overseers of the DDR processes, but we were into the actual DDR, visiting the disarmament camps and communities, and supplicating and persuading fighters - child soldiers and adult combatants alike - to give up their weapons.”

Liberian women made vital contributions to the DDR programme by engaging UNMIL on matters of implementation strategies. They were particularly focused on the DDR of child soldiers, seeing as children constituted the vast majority of fighters (approximately number of 15,000 to 20,000, inclusive of girls) in the ranks and battle grounds of the rebel groups (Adebajo 2002). It is important to note that the operationalization of these in the DDR was still under the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace Campaign, which as highlighted by

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<sup>48</sup> Worth noting is the fact that the percentage of women's involvement in 2003 following was far higher than in during and after the first civil war.

Alaga (2011: 23), comprised of women from other pivotal organizations, including the like WIPNET-WANEP, LWI, MARWOPNET, the Muslim Women Association and the Christian Women Association, and the Association of Female Lawyers in Liberia (AFELL), among others. Some noticeable outcomes of the involvement of these women in the DDR was the recognition of their efforts by UNMIL, who officially accorded women the platform to lobby and enlighten communities about the arms control, disarmament and reintegration agenda (Alaga 2011; Bastick 2008). In taking up this role play, women were able to:

- i. Gain the confidence of the combatants and communities as unbiased peacemakers and conciliators in the DDR programme; and
- ii. Reintegrate many child soldiers back into their communities through organized cleansing ceremonies, where the ex-combatants were dressed in white as a symbol of peace and accompanied by their families back into their communities (Alaga 2011: 14).
- iii. Succeed in demanding for the recruitment of more women into all security services, leading to the adoption of the 20 percent quota for their inclusion in police and military services sectors, with a significant component of Indian police women as an enhancement for more female recruits;
- iv. Advocate for operative and efficient genderized SSR processes to be implemented in tandem with transformative training activities that provide trauma therapy for security forces, retributive reform programs that was/is considerate of the needs of men, women as well as young detainees, and non-monetary or sexually exploitative DDR of ex-combatants and communities (Bastick 2008:9-10).

According to Valasek (2008:19), a total of 22,370 women and 2,440 girls had undergone the disarmament and demobilization process by February 2005, and a collective of 13,223 of these women were reintegrated back into society and empowered in different self-sustaining and enabling sectors like agriculture, vocational training (including sewing and hairdressing), and formal education. By the end of the entire DDR process in October of 2007, a total of 90,000 former fighters (including men, women and children) had successfully undergone the

DDR programme (McCarthy 2011:107). In line with reports by UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNMIL, some of the distinguished outcomes of the gendered-responsive SSR process adopted for Liberia are evidenced by the following developments:

- i. The establishment a Women and Children Protection Section of the Liberian National Police (LNP) and a Women and Children's unit in the Liberian prisons in 2005, with specially trained officers whose tasks involve the handling and management of cases of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence (Bastick 2008: 10).
- ii. The graduation of 150 women recruits from the police school in 2009, a 12.6 percent plus representation of women in the police force, and the training of close to 3,000 police officers to be vest with dealing with criminal investigations, cases relating to protection of women and children, and issues pertaining to firearms (DCAF 2011: 9-10).

The overall conclusion gathered from field discussions with regards to Liberia's security sector reformation is that it remains a working progress, and continuous efforts are being made to ensure the respect of the human's rights and safety of women working in all security sectors of the state. This in particular was confirmed in the interview with the Liberian Female Law Enforcement Association (LIFLEA), whereby she elaborated on the work the organization thus:

"LIFLEA seeks to advocate for female security officers in all the security agencies (private and Public) in Liberia, and advance their training, seek redress when their rights are trampled upon, and for challenges they face as female officers on the job. When these challenges are brought to our attention, we contact the head of their agencies for speedy resolution. For example, a female officer was slapped by an assistant minister in government without major reasons. When the information reached us here at LIFLEA, we wrote the office of the president informing her of the action of a minister in her government, towards women. The president investigated the matter and that minister was dismissed from his job based on his actions. Also, given the ever-present challenge of women's marginalization especially when it comes to job opportunities, LIFLEA always make efforts to advocate for the women to get the job where possible. However, this intervention only happens in situations where we are aware that the female applicant



is equally capable and qualified for the job as her male counterpart, but stands the chance of not being offered the position because of her gender” (UI-6, July 2015).

Advocating equal opportunities for women in traditionally male-dominated professions, the security domain being one of such, is at an increase especially in post-conflict societies. According to participants from the Ministry of Gender (UI-4 July 2015) and UNMIL (UI-7 July 2015), women are suitably and equally proficient to undertake and deliver on their responsibilities in the security sector, as does their male colleagues. Skills development, capacity building, and know-how through training are benchmarks in the security domain, UI-6 asserted. Remarkably, the interview with LIFLEA was conducted while some of its female members were undergoing training. The organization’s trainings and programs, are generally implemented in consultation and collaboration with other organizations (the Gender ministry, UNMIL, Immigration and Naturalization, which has the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization Women Association (BINWA), the Liberia’s National Police and Army sectors, AFELL, WONGOSOL, etc.), and are followed by graduation ceremonies of the trainees (UI-6, July 2015).

In a review of efforts towards security sector reform, this study observed that ensuring gender-inclusivity in the security pillar has been vital in setting the pace for relative realization and effectiveness of Liberia’s post-conflict agenda. This is in the sense that the politics of security as a predominantly men venture has transformed significantly, with women assuming different positions in the security sector and advocating for equal opportunities and participation. More so, women’s access to the security sector in Liberia has been indicative of their ability to plot a course around patriarchal structures and stereotypes that repress, marginalize, violate, and discriminate against women’s rights. With women organizations being progressively assertive, women empowerment becomes prominent in this window of access. Besides, the push for recognition of their human and civil rights as equal stakeholders in the reconstruction and development of Liberia, continue to undergird the essence of the country’s post-conflict agenda.

Narratives of women’s involvement in the security sector in Liberia also highlight the power in women’s organizational agency. Recapping the review of literature from the historical to the contemporary, this represents an important milestone for women’s leadership in

peacebuilding that is reflected in the provisions of UNSCR1325 (2000). Further perspectives on women's role in security sector programming in post-conflict Liberia is exemplified through WANEP/WIPNET's early warning and response projects. The organization trains women to be early warning monitors of indicators of simmering tensions, which they report on in order to ensure decisive response and prevention mechanisms to be employed. This project entails a lot of collaboration across the various spheres of the society, including community leaders and chiefs, other civil society organizations, and private and public security sectors (UI-9, July 2015). In the framework of post-conflict environments, such activities often go beyond early warning monitoring, to provide women with the understanding and skills on how to address issues of women peace and security as it concerns and relates to them and their communities.

#### **5.2.3.2. Women, governance and participation in post-conflict Liberia**

What generally constitutes governance and participation, especially in the matter of post-conflict was discussed in the theoretical chapter. Noting that bad governance was among the many causes of the Liberian civil wars (Adebajo 2002: 19), was grounds enough for Liberia to seek democratically inclusive and accountable processes to the lead up of its 2005 elections. According to Gariba (2011), the characteristics defining governance processes are comprehensive and include adherence to the rule of law; voting and electoral legitimacy; decentralization of power; freedom of expression and association; accountable and transparent leadership that is development focused; as well as a resilient, responsive and participatory civil society. In essence, governance in the framework of post-conflict entails addressing imbalances and inequalities in the spheres of public governance that triggered the socio-economic and political conflict, to begin with, as well as ensuring good governance (Nyei 2014: 2) that is most importantly gender responsive to the rights and needs of both women and men.

On the element of inclusivity, the struggles of Liberian women and women's organizations from the onset of the conflicts to be part and parcel of peacebuilding dialogue and implementation processes, is quite evident from the narratives above. According to Atuobi (2010: 3), this explains why some of its leaders were officially selected to represent the wider

organizations of civil society on the governing body of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), as provided for in the CPA of 2003. Examining women's contributions to build a legitimate and inclusive state and civil society capacity to consolidate peace in post-conflict Liberia, the focus is centred on their role on electoral processes. These processes entail engaging measures to vote a political leader into power, and are quite significant for the success of conflict resolution and peace processes. However, Korth (2011:9) maintains that the stances and differences of contending candidates and their parties bear both tendencies of positively influencing peace or creating an avenue of relapse into violence. In the context of post-conflict environments, these processes are undertaken in line with the agenda and mandate of UN peace operations, with an overall aim of engendering the citizenry, actors and stakeholders' confidence in the conduct of the elections and its outcome (Korth 2011; UI-7 July 2015). The Commission on the Status of Women (2004:2) emphasizes on the importance of gender-sensitive, integrative, and responsive frameworks and guidelines that allow for full and equal participation of women in all phases of strategizing and implementation of electoral processes in post-conflict settings. While this recommendation remains a challenge in practice, women's increase consciousness and organizational agency to create gender-equal participatory and development environments have seen them navigating the patriarchal spaces and politics to influence decision-making on the selection of electoral candidacy and the voting process. For example, narratives of Liberian electoral experience in the post-conflict tells of women's role in mobilizing their fellow women and overseeing the election processes. As recorded by Leymah Gbowee (2013):

Just before elections in post-2003, we had done our analysis and knew the election will sway in a way that will not be favourable to women if we did not do spatial/starched up campaigns to mobilize women to vote. I had been invited to speak at an international gathering of election experts from the USA and other parts of the world. I told them about our analysis, and they said they cannot do anything, that the money they had was for only for 10days of voters' registration, and after 10 days, nothing more can happen. Five days into voters' registration, ten business districts could barely get women registered, because politics, as women saw and perceived was a male thing. It was easy for women to work for peace, but they did not see anything within themselves to change the political dynamics of the country. We told ourselves, if we seat again, we will lose, it is time for us to harness our powers. We gathered a team of 250 women, 25 in each section. Some other women's groups took women to the rural communities in

Monrovia's ten business districts and in less than five days, we registered 70425 female voters. The groups that went around the country also worked, and by the time we put together the number of registered voters, we had 50 plus one more women registered than men. In the end, our agency paid off as women came out in their numbers to cast their votes, and Africa's first female president was elected and re-elected into power in 2005 and 2011 respectively.

Liberian women's advocacy, lobbying and mobilization to fully participate and impact the electoral processes, depict the power therein in the voices and actions of women to overcome their marginalization in the contexts of decision-making. The election of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf represents one of the major achievements of women's peace pursuit and empowerment objectives in Liberia. This perspective of women's activism and success in changing the political paradigm and landscape of Liberia was affirmatively noted by research participants as signifying a good strategy and progress by women to empower women through a female leader as a resource for women's voices. This transformative impact of women's power is also reflected in WANEP/WIPNET's organizational role as election observers and monitors, who through their human rights and governance projects, provides civic education on voting processes in communities before elections are organized and effected (UI-9 July 2015).

In view of the preceding, this study ascertained that there is an innate correlation between women, governance, and participation in the electoral or governmental dimension of change in Liberia. According to the Knowledge Platform Security & the Rule of Law *et.al.* (2015), the power of women's voices in influencing governance processes in post-conflict situations is interlinked to how the legacies of conflict and the power relations/structures that emasculate women's political participation, are managed. So, electoral processes go well beyond electing a leader to include the constructive espousal of good governance policies and practices, which is the foundation and centre of leadership. Seeing as the advancement of development that is sustainable, is one of the underlying objectives for consolidating peace, this study identified that the substantive participation of Liberian women in governance and post-conflict decision-making is imperative for the country's transformative agenda. According to UI-8 and UI-2, women's organizing and strategizing to ensure the attainment of this goal, has seen continuous advocacy for 30 (now 50) percent equal quota representation

of both women and men in public decision-making processes, by organizations like the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia (AFELL) and MARWOPNET. Further acknowledging the importance of women's voices in shaping Liberia's democratic governance processes, UI-4 asserted that their advocacy for equal and operational quota suggests a critical strategic position, which cogitated, will go a long way to enhance Liberia's peacebuilding, reconstruction and development agenda.

Institutionalizing good governance transcends inclusivity and representation, to associate with the principles of accountability and transparency. Appraising women's political participation in this light, the study discerned that Leymah Gbowee in efforts to ensure these principles, proposed the holding of peer reviews with the President of Liberia and the women movement on an intermittent basis (Leymah Gbowee 2011). Going by the instrument of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) founded in 2003, the concept of peer review entails a self-monitoring mechanism for assessing a state's performance and advancement in the areas of democracy; political, economic, and corporate governance and management; and socio-economic development (African Union 2017). The mere proposition to conduct and oversee such an exercise in Liberia, speaks to the continuous agency of women to own their political processes by evaluating the office of the president elect in terms of adherence to leadership values and the implementation of governance and development policies of the state. While this idea to peer review initially hit a glitch, the instrumentality of women's voices in supporting Liberia's peacebuilding agenda was once again recognized in August 2010, as Leymah Gbowee led a delegation of women movement of Liberia to hold the first peer review. Appositely, this exercise was the first of its kind in Africa, where a president opened herself for criticism. As Leymah further underscored, "*the process was not derisive or condescending... We the women voiced to our leader the areas where she had succeeded and failed as a president...and where she had failed us as women in her office as president*"<sup>49</sup> (2011). Subsequent to this peer review, two more have been conducted with the president, and the review process

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<sup>49</sup> It is important to note that this peer review exercise of the President's office raises the question of whether having a woman in position of power translates into the advancement of women's interests. This inquiry resonates with the study's research question: How has Liberia's post-conflict gender politics of having a female president influenced the current positioning of women's role and participation in decision-making processes? Section 6.3.4 of the chapter that follows (six) explores this question and chapter seven further elaborates on it in the discourse of the challenges that women face in their roles as peacebuilders.

of her office and work as President of Liberia continues to be carried out. From field study, it is understood that the peer review strategy by Liberian women sets a platform for women's rational participation, ownership, and contribution in promoting the self-monitoring of leadership practices that position good governance and the development of the nation-state at the centre of achieving the country's post-conflict agenda.

The process of governance and participation constitutes one of the central pillars in the framework of post-conflict agendas. This process aims to build an environment that fosters political participation, inclusiveness, and cooperation between the government (top-down governance process) and the governed (bottom-up participatory process), and local ownership of the processes (Orr 2002:140-141). In keeping with this importance, as will be expounded in chapter six, the government of Liberia initiated a constitutional reform process in 2012, of which discussions have been oriented towards issues of devolution of power (Nyei 2014: 5). Likewise, the government through a nationwide consultative process, involved publicly with county officials and chiefs in the local communities, as well as with grassroots civil society agencies and development partners to create a National policy on decentralization and local governance (Nyei 2014: 9). These are all efforts indicative of the need and imperative to deliver on the processes that are inclusive and aimed to promote peace in Liberia. Therefore, how the government of Liberia manages the processes of governance reform and regionalization of power, very much informs the objective of inclusive participation and outcome of its post-conflict agenda. It also provides perspectives on how the government's ability to be accountable and transparent and efficient in the delivery of service and the rule of law, serve to promote women's efforts towards building and ensuring the sustainability of post-conflict development. Besides, the African Union (2006: 11-12) underscores that the reformation of public governance in post-conflict settings must bring about greater accountability to women by guaranteeing their human and civil rights, equal privileges to hold positions of leadership, and contribute to decision-making both as elites and grassroots women.

### **5.2.3.3. Women, justice and reconciliation in post-conflict Liberia**

The experience of conflict is destructive, not only to property, but to human lives and human relations. Therefore, the importance for post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction agendas to include justice and reconciliation processes as a necessity for consolidating peace that is long-term. The justice factor in peacebuilding processes serves as a requisite for addressing the injustices of war, and reconciliation element is vital for the restoration of relationships and the building of peaceful co-existence, which may be instrumental for the prevention of potential conflicts.

In the Liberian context, accounts of the conflict history evidence that a vast majority of the population was affected and abused in one way or another. In this consideration, the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement provisioned for the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and an Independent National Commission on Human Rights (INCHR). As per the wordings of the Article XIII of the CPA, the TRC is mandated to “provide a forum that will address issues of impunity, as well as the opportunity for both victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to share their experiences in order to get a clear picture of the past to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation” (CPA 2003). In this manner, ‘An Act to Establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Liberia’ was approved in June 2005 under NTGL, and launched in June 2006 under the new Government of President Ellen Johnson, to run till 2009. The mandate of the Commission as provisioned in Article IV of the Act includes supporting and promoting ‘national peace, security, unity and reconciliation’ in Liberia. This mandate is to be achieved through the pursuance of the objectives stated in Article IV (Section 4, a-f) of the Act, of which it necessitates for the Commission to:

“(a) Investigate of gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law as well as abuses that occurred, including massacres, sexual violations, murder, extra-judicial killings and economic crimes, such as the exploitation of natural or public resources to perpetuate armed conflicts, during the period January 1979 to October 14, 2003; determining whether these were isolated incidents or part of a systematic pattern; establishing the antecedents, circumstances factors and context of such violations and abuses; and determining those responsible for the commission of the violations and abuses and their motives as well as their impact on victims; (b) Provide



a forum that will address issues of impunity, as well as an opportunity for both victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to share their experiences in order to create a clear picture of the past to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation; (e) Adopt specific mechanisms and procedures to address the experiences of women, children and vulnerable groups, paying particular attention to gender-based violations, as well as to the issue of child soldiers, and to provide opportunities for them to relate their stories” (An Act to Establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, June 2005).

Clearly, the Act articulates the need to address women issues. There is no gainsaying the violence and human rights abuses that were committed against women throughout the fourteen years period of the Liberian civil wars right to its aftermath. Not only were women used as slaves, beaten and tortured, they were also the target subjects of SGBV. Aside from taking account of the experiences of women and dealing with them, the Act further provisions for the TRC to be predominantly inclusive of the civil society, also incorporating women as Commissioners. It is noted here that at the signing of the CPA, the Liberian civil society was acknowledged as vital a stakeholder in the management and implementation of effective peacebuilding and reconstruction processes in the country. To this end, Pajibo (2008:12) asserts that civil society organizations - the Transitional Justice Working Group (TJWG) to be specific, welcomed the notion of the TRC by contributing to its establishment. Likewise, the TJWG adopted the operative goal of ensuring that issues of the past were addressed and perpetrators of crimes against humanity punished and held accountable (Pajibo 2008:12).

Long (2008:5) details that in the lead up to the final compilation of the TRC report, the Commission in 2008 consulted and engaged communities in the different counties across Liberia in conversations and hearings to take witness testimonies on occurrences of human rights transgressions and investigate them accordingly (Cibelli, Hoover and Krüger 2009). Noteworthy here is the fact that women constituted a major part of the hearing processes, and about 48 to 50 percent of the testimonials collected by the TRC in actual fact came from the women population (Long 2008:5; Cibelli, Hoover and Krüger 2009:5), since investigating the particular role and experiences of women during the conflict, was one of the objectives of the TRC mandate. Discussing the position of women’s participation in the TRC processes, UI-2 (July 2015) articulated that:

WONGOSOL was part and parcel of the TRC processes from the very beginning. We the women of Liberia were very involved in the TRC processes, organizing with the support of the TRC Gender Unit and United Nations Development Fund for Women. As stakeholders we were at the forefront of the TRC dialogue that took place all over the country with women. In actual fact, the dialogues were organized by our network member organizations under the egis and coordination of WONGOSOL, and together with the TRC, we engaged more than 600 women. In each of the Counties we visited, we mobilized as many women as we could and encouraged them to be part of the Transitional Justice dialogues, to voice out their needs and concerns as we discussed, took statements and investigated issues around human rights violations. This operation thus included creating platforms for both actors, victims and perpetrators to be heard (UI-2, July 2015).

According to Cibelli, Hoover and Krüger (2009), the Liberian TRC did well in reassuring and motivating women to come forth with their testimonies, and ensured their voices and perspectives echoed in its final report that was submitted in 2009, as provisioned in Article IV, Section 4(f) in the Act to Establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2005). As stated by UI-2, most accounts of women's conflict experience during the TRC meetings recorded their ordeals of sexual-based violence and abuse. However, these experiences as gathered from literature and some of the participants, were not extensively captured in detail in the TRC report. Tripp (2015:105) however draws attention to what has been termed the polemical nature of some of the recommendations submitted by the TRC in its final report, which amongst other proposals vetoed Ellen Johnson from holding office. In this given, the traditional truth-seeking and reconciliation processes through Peace or Palava Huts as recommended by the TRC were established instead of tribunals to prosecute war crimes.

The Palava Huts, as indicated in the TRC final report had long been the traditional platform and mechanism for resolving conflicts and problems in Liberia prior to the coming of the free Anglo-American slaves. The Report emphasizes the composition of these Huts to include "traditional authority structures, civil society and human rights organizations, religious institutions and local communities, labour unions, victim groups, child advocacy groups, the children parliament, women's organizations, youth and student organizations, and professional bodies. It also stresses that the Huts must not include people or persons identified, known or accused of past and current human rights abuses, or of any form of corruption (TRC Liberia - Final Report 2009: 1-2). The Palava Huts are tasked with addressing the legacies of

past and existent violence and trauma experiences by reconciling families, people and communities through customary conflict resolution and reconciliation approaches (TRC Liberia - Final Report 2009). The overall aim of this process is to ensure the practicalization of the recommendations put forth by the TRC for the purpose of strengthening peace that is long-lasting peace in Liberia.

While the Palava/Peace Huts strategy is historical in Liberia, their emergence in the matter of post-conflict is partly attributed to women's agency and ingenuities for the peaceful resolution of the Liberian conflict, as manifested through the Mass Action Campaign (United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office/Peacebuilding Fund 2013). Looking at the background development of the Palava Huts or Peace Forums, this study noted that its composition actually points towards the importance of women's inclusion and role in the pillar of justice and reconciliation in post-conflict Liberia. Following on from this, UI-4 (July 2015) acknowledged that the Ministry of Gender works in synergy with women organizations to strengthen women's participation in the Palava/Peace Huts and creates platforms for discussing successes and challenges of the implementation process. More so, from the FGD sessions, it was established that since the Palava/Peace Hut mechanism aims to foster community conflict management initiatives and women's involvement in the process, women also liaise between the community and the local police to report incidences, seek rapid responses, and follow-up ongoing cases. The programmes undertaken by the Palava/Peace Huts initiatives span women and youth empowerment, education, sports, conflict resolution, dialogue and storytelling exercises, to include the provision of psycho-social support to former child soldiers and ex-combatants through the training and practice of mindfulness, and transforming them into peace messengers (The Liberian Peace Hut Alliance). The varied dimensions of the Palava Hut activities and the fact that the initiative is orthodox and rooted in socio-cultural norms and values, provide the basis for claims that diligent and inclusive implementation processes may contribute to the solidification of long-term peace in Liberia. More so, several assertions have been made to the effect that Liberians believe in the integrity and legitimacy of the Palava Hut system; its accessibility to most, particularly the rural inhabitants and the urban poor population who cannot easily access legislative justice; and its decentralized, community-based, and participatory nature (Pajibo 2008:23; Danso 2016:4).

In the framework of women, justice, and reconciliation, the psycho-social support component tallies with the process of social reintegration of ex-combatants, which involves healing the wounds of past human rights abuses through the TRC platforms or retributory tribunal systems<sup>50</sup> (Gariba 2011). Reading the term psycho-social in the context of (post-) conflict arrangements would refer to the psychological and social consequences or dimension of conflict on individuals, families, communities, and society at large. Providing psycho-social support in this given entails engaging and undertaking different activities and processes with the help and participation of the affected to facilitate recovery, resilience, coping, and social cohesion within them and outwardly as well (IFRC Reference Centre for Psychosocial Support 2014). As earlier reviewed in chapter two of this study, the consequences of conflict are dire on human and society's development even after the wars have ended. Conflict lived experiences are vast, including human and humanities exposure to the harsh realities of being victims and survivors of conflict, combatants, perpetrators of violence, child soldiers, sex slaves etc. Dealing with or overcoming the trauma of these experiences necessitates the provision of different kinds of community-focused and person-focused support and services (World Health Organization et.al 2012). According to UI-1 (July 2015), providing healing, fostering trust and tolerance, and assisting to promote reconciliation are generally at the centre of the psycho-social support activities. This is evident in the following narratives by UI-1 on some of NAWOCOL's support efforts at peace and reconciliation.

Following the end of the first civil war, the impact remained rife, as the relationship between women from the different warring tribes was strained and poor. So as a women's organization, NAWOCOL targeted communities where tensions and such strained relationships were high. In Nimba County, the Gio and the Mano were against the Mandingo, and in Grand Gedeh County the Krahn were against the Gio and the Mano. In these Counties, we organized women from these ethnic groups to do brushing, clearing and planting on the farms using the 'Kou-is' approach, which is a traditional form of farming where women work together in groups. Employing this method helped in bringing the women together in Grand Gedeh and Nimba Counties.

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<sup>50</sup> Under the TRC agenda, the government of Liberia has so far purposefully chosen the option of reconciliation rather than retributive justice TRC to bring to book offenders of past human rights abuses, war crimes and crimes or crimes against humanity, except the case of its former President Charles Taylor who today faces trial at the International Criminal Court of Justice for crimes against humanity.

In same efforts, NAWOCOL established tailoring shops in the communities of these Counties. Women love to dress and with these tailoring shops, the tailors must come in contact with somebody who want their clothes sewed. It is somehow impossible to sew dresses for women without touching them, since measurement taking is involve. By doing so, these women tailors worked and sewed dresses for women from different communities. For instance, say a Gio woman desired to have her dress made, and the only tailoring shop in the community was operated by a Krahn women, that scenario provided them with no major choices or alternatives, but to go to the tailor to have the dress sewed. This is how they started coming in contact with each other, given that for a dress to be made, both women had to converse to decide the style. Such personal touch and conversation gradually led women in these Counties to bond and build relationships with one another.

In some cases, the organization erected schools and instituted peace clubs on lands bordering two towns from two different tribes, given to us by the leaders or people of the communities. This initiative also helped in reconciling the communities, in that, the schools accommodated and welcomed children from the different tribes, it encouraged their inclusive participation in the activities of peace clubs, and ensured the instructors and educators came from the various tribal groups.

In addition, UI-9 (July 2015) asserted that women have made significant progress contributing to the reconciliation agenda of Liberia. Making reference to the work they do as an organization to ensure justice and reconciliation and the overall peacebuilding objective, she stated:

Our strategy is that we want Liberians to adopt the culture of non-violence and deal with conflicts non-violently, by ensuring people live together in peace and understand that differences can always be amicably resolved. To continuously realize this our objective, we run a number of peace hubs in different communities through women of WIPNET in our network branches. We carry out different training and awareness programmes, some on protection from SGBV for example, and assist survivors get to the police or courts to report such incidences. Our WIPNET women also go to the peace hubs to address complaints of domestic violence as well as SGBV in such communities, when brought to their attention (UI-9 July 2015).

Women's contributions to the justice and reconciliation agenda of Liberia is realized through awareness raising and psycho-social support to assist women deal especially with the stress and stigma of abuse and violence, as provisioned in Article VII, Section 26(j) of the Act to Establish the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2005). For example, the Ganta Concern Women offer counselling to women who are either victims or survivors of domestic violence

or sexual abuse (FGD-C and FGD-D, July 2015). Likewise, WIPNET through its drama program raises awareness on issues around rape and inheritance law, as does DEN-L through its theatre and literacy training initiatives for local organizations and community leaders, with the goal of enhancing the voices and participation of grassroots communities in decision-making that aim to influence their lives (UI-10, FGD-A and FGD-B, July 2015). It is in this spirit of raising awareness and providing support that the Association of Female Lawyers of Liberia pushed for the involvement of the Magistrate Courts and its associates in Liberia's post-conflict reconciliation and peacebuilding processes, and successfully advocated for the enactment of the new Law on Rape and Inheritance in 2006 (USAID 2007:18).

Important to note from the afore-discussed is the fact that the TRC process in Liberia, like any other in the context of post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction, are challenged by factors such as: slow implementation of policies; the continuous perpetration and subjection of women to sexual abuse and violence; the problem of stigmatization and barriers accession opportunities; as well as challenges ingrained in the justice and reconciliation mechanisms adopted for the process. While some of these challenges are expounded in chapter seven as impediments to women's peacebuilding efforts, the study also reckons to highlight that justice and reconciliation activities often overlap with those aimed at enhancing socio-economic welfare in the post-conflict. For instance, in assessing 'Truth Seeking and Gender' in Liberia, Pillay (2009:98) explicated that women were more "concerned with the loss of their livelihoods and addressing daily challenges they faced, like the lack of safe drinking water; housing; health care; and education, rather than the redress and reparations for sexual violence." In consideration of this, women's needs and interests can be situated in their desire for adequate healthcare, appropriate sanitation and safe water, education and shelter, and just about the necessary welfare services as a strategic human entitlement for ensuring social and economic security.

#### **5.2.3.4. Women and socio-economic wellbeing in post-conflict Liberia**

Building peace and reconstructing societies emerging from conflict or already in the state of post-conflict obliges stakeholders to engage concerted efforts and approaches towards achieving social and economic reformation and governance as parallel short- mid- and long-



term security and development objectives for sustainable peace. This is necessary because strengthening state and society's social and economic structures and capacities, especially in the aftermath of conflict is quite pivotal for the prevention of further conflict outbreaks. And as in most post-conflict agendas, the civil society, women's organizations inclusive, are always precisely entreated to contribute and ensure the implementation of the processes, in this the case socio-economic.

Generally social and economic rehabilitation agendas in the post-conflict settings are very broad to elucidate. This is because the socio-economic reconstruction processes must take into consideration development convolutions such as inequality and marginalization in socio-economic structures and policies, economic and resource mismanagement, poverty and corruption, and institutional debility that might have been at the roots of the conflict in the first place. But as earlier reviewed in literature, Hamre and Sullivan (2002: 91) distinguish socio-economic wellbeing as including the provision of emergency humanitarian relief services and basics, such as health, education and livelihood to the population, initiating and promoting sustainable economic development projects, and institutionalizing inclusive long-term development programme. According to Ohiorhenuan (2011:3) engaging in post-conflict agendas cannot be likened only to the rebuilding of the economic and institutional engines to their former state prior to conflict outbreak. This engagement necessitates and must involve "socio-economic transformation that combines far-reaching economic, institutional, legal, and policy reforms that permit war-torn countries to re-establish the foundations for self-sustaining development, by building back differently and better" (Ohiorhenuan 2011:3).

The Liberian example reflects a history of a protracted conflict that decimated the country, leaving it with dire socio-economic consequences. A study by Radelet (2007:4) indicate that from the first conflict emergence up till 2005, Liberia experienced "high levels of poverty with above 75 percent living below the poverty line of a dollar per day; high unemployment and underemployment levels, as refugees, ex-combatants, and displaced persons returning back to Liberia and their communities strove to find work; the farms had been abandoned, so agricultural productions plunged; and schools, hospitals, and clinics were demolished." In this given, the African Development Bank Group (AfDB 2013:14 & 15) also highlights some of the conflict effects to include: the decimation of more than 90 percent of health facilities;



the enfeeblement of both primary and tertiary educational systems; and a complete age group of youth forfeiting normal education, a deficit that caused most to be physically and psychologically incapacitated and unfit for work opportunities (AfDB 2013:38). Therefore, there is no opposing that during conflict, social and economic rights are violated. However, failure to address such violations in the event of post-conflict only increases the already existing injustice for victims and impede the effective implementation of peacebuilding, reconstruction and development processes.

That the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, provisions for equal social and economic rights, among others, for both men and women, is to stress on its importance to human and societal development. Ensuring and guaranteeing socio-economic rights and welfare in post-conflict situations is particularly relevant for women, since they bear the brunt of conflict and are the most marginalized in society, especially in decision-making and resource allocation processes (UI-10, UI-11 and UI-12 July 2015). Understanding this importance particularly in the context of post-conflict Liberia, it is necessary to underline that since the assumption of the Presidential office by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in 2006, the Liberian government has taken significant steps to implement policies, such as its “Poverty Reduction Strategy for 2006-2008, 2008-2011, 2012-2018 and the Liberia Rising: Vision 2030” (Dorliae and Nichols 2012: 10). These strategies build around four pillars aimed at consolidating peace and security; reviving the economy; reinforcing governance and the rule of law; ensuring infrastructural rehabilitation and the provision of basic services (Radelet 2007:6; Dorliae and Nichols 2012: 10). In same efforts to ensure the socio-economic welfare of Liberians, the government in 2008 adopted a National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (FNSNS) and Food and Agriculture Policy and Strategy, to ensure consistent availability of food to all Liberians and revitalize the country’s agricultural sector (AfDB 2013: 31). These policy contexts underscore the impetus of concerted efforts to transform Liberia, which this study maintains, are not only aligned with developments vital for achieving the goals of post-conflict agendas, but also the women’s empowerment and gender incorporation as paramount for the implementation and effectiveness of the policies.

If the preceding sub-section discussions have established one thing, it is the fact that the participation of women in the initiation and implementation of post-conflict processes are imperative for consolidating peace and ensuring sustainability. Capitalizing on this, the study specified that all the women's organizations in Liberia that participated in this research, are involved in different initiatives to safeguard the social and economic rights and interests of women and girls as their primary focus, and then of their communities and society at large. For example, the Ganta Concern Women empowers and builds the economic capacity of women through their agricultural cassava production project. As articulated by the members during focus group discussions, the cassava project has greatly contributed to giving them a livelihood base to rely on (FGD-C and FGD-D, July 2015). As stated by one of the participants:

“I am today an empowered woman who can sustain my family and provide for my children, thanks to Ganta Concern Women and their different initiatives to ensure that we as women can self-sustain ourselves. Through our cassava project, I have learnt new skills on how to plant, harvest and process cassavas, something I did not know before”

The above view was also resonated by most FGD-C and FGD-D participants. In addition, UI-11 alluded that cassava is produced in small scale by members of Ganta Concern Women on community lands that have been prescribed for the cassava project, and the project benefits all its 500 plus members in all the nine communities in Nimba County. This was corroborated by UI-15 and UI-16, who further stated that cassava cultivation remained one of Ganta Concern Women focal projects, contributing to the organization as well as various household capitals and food subsistence, until the recent resource challenges that brought the project to an almost halt. In understanding the cassava project as an initiative to boost women's economic empowerment, the study observed that cassava is a major staple crop and food in Liberia, which can be processed into different meal forms for both commercialization and consumption purposes. Moreover, the Ganta Concern Women have a rotating loan coffer that provides its members the means for resources to undertake productive, viable and profit making initiatives. In view of the rotating funds, most of the FGD-C and FGD-D (July 2015) participants acknowledged that its availability for loans, has greatly assisted them as individual members of the organization to start up a small business. These initiatives, mostly

in the form of petite trading, serves for profit making and provision and maintenance of their households, since most of them shoulder that social and economic responsibility.

Literature on the experiences of people, particularly of women in post-conflict situations reveals that their economic and social positioning can be bettered enormously during the processes of reconstruction and development (True 2013). Gaining such access to economic and social power however warrants a gender-equal operational space, which explains women's organizational efforts towards their economic empowerment. Still in line with empowering women economically, it was identified that WANEP/WIPNET builds the capacity of women through some of their training initiatives, like the soap making project, which teaches women and girls how to make soap for household use and market purposes (UI-9 July 2015). The organization also operates a community radio programme where women share their entrepreneurship experiences, and how they are able to sustain their families as a result. Likewise, at the grassroots level, the organization runs a sewing project where they train young mothers and girls on how to sew and make dresses (FGD-A and FGD-B, July 2015). According to UI-13 and UI-14, the sewing project aims to empower women and girls with tailoring skills, and it had in the past offered such training to quite a number, before its current challenge of lack of maintenance resources.

In the arena of social welfare and empowerment, women's organizations have also been engaged in different educational initiatives as vital for the transformation of the structures of social inequalities that confront youth, particularly the young girls. MARWOPNET, for instance, trains young girls through its peace education project on gender equality, how to preserve peace, and build social cohesion. It takes in especially young girls who are school drop outs to participate in the peace clubs activities, and provide them with tools on how to create and promote the culture of peace and engage non-violent strategies as alternatives to managing conflict situations (UI-8 July 2015). While this initiative of peace education is vital for young people in a society like Liberia that has suffered the ills of war, UI-10 also asserted that general education, particularly of the girl children, should be seen as a necessity and a human/development entitlement and interest. In Liberia, especially the rural areas, as in some parts of the continent, girls are often placed in disadvantaged situation as compared to boys when it comes to family decisions on educational rights and opportunities. Besides, the

1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, stresses the need for men and women to have equal rights to education. Accentuating this fact in the framework of Liberian experience, UI-4 maintained that ensuring the education of the girl children in Liberia is an equally important component that can boost Liberia's realization of its reconstruction and development objectives. Taking due and progressive steps in this light, are a number of education programmes like the 'The Girls Transformative Leadership Initiative', founded by Leymah Gbowee in 2007 and ongoing in several communities in Liberia. The initiative sensitizes young girls and women to reflect from within and bring out the power to develop themselves and their communities by taking leading roles. Accordingly, the initiative has transformed the lives of young women in most of the communities they have worked with, in that:

“women who did not see their future pass getting married early and having children, are now going to college and university, some of them under our scholarship program...from community to community, we see girls resisting early marriages, the temptation of being prostitutes, versus now going back to school...it is happening one girl at a time. Each of these young women have realized that the power to transform their lives first, and their community lies within them, and within us women...” (Leymah Gbowee 2013).

From this excerpt, the importance and gains of education as an individual and inclusive transformative ideal for societies transitioning from conflict cannot be overemphasized. To the women and socio-economic welfare pillar, is also the focus on delivering on the basic as well as specific health needs of the post-conflict society. On the component of access to adequate health facilities and services, the general consensus from the women was that it remains a huge challenge for many, particularly women. However, their efforts in this area remain visible, especially following the outbreak of the Ebola Virus in 2014-2015 in Liberia and its neighbouring countries, Guinea and Sierra Leone. During the outbreak, LIFLEA conducted training on prevention, which aimed to sensitize and educate its security personnel on how to contain and prevent the spread of the virus at major border points where they were assigned or on duty (UI-6, July 2015). On this, the participants further remarked *“security is the first point of contact and our rights to keep safe from contacting disease of any form is important...so to save others, we must then be trained to prevent the spread of the virus disease”* (UI-6, July 2015). In the same spirit of service and efforts to contribute to the containment of the health pandemic,

WIPNET, NAWOCOL, MARWOPNET, WONGOSOL, and Ganta Concern Women, were all involved in sensitization, awareness raising and community outreach initiatives to help prevent the virus spreading further and affecting people than it already had.

Departing from the above, women's involvement in the socio-economic agenda of Liberia constitute of measures to develop and improve responses to concerns about their social and economic rights and welfares, as well as that of their communities. Through these efforts, women are also increasing their representation and participation in post-conflict governance and challenging the unequal socio-economic structures that make them susceptible to continuous marginalization, poverty and unequal access to social and economic security and development opportunities. The challenges in the performance of their roles cannot however be omitted, as will be discussed in chapter seven. And as earlier indicated, the government is a key and major stakeholder in overseeing the socio-economic agenda in its post-conflict framework. Therefore, questions as to how the government is implementing this and enhancing women's peacebuilding efforts in the process, is addressed in the chapter that follows.

### **5.3. Conclusion**

This chapter basically explored the role of women in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture, drawing directly from their experiences as recounted during focus group discussions and interviews held in Liberia throughout the month of July 2015. In this manner, the chapter canvassed the peacebuilding strategies and approaches used by Liberian women from grassroots through to national levels in their quest for peace during the years of conflict upheavals, and their eventual success in attaining their peace goal for Liberia. It likewise briefed that the Liberian example reflects a history of a protracted conflict that decimated not only the institutions, structures and services of government, but also displaced thousands and destroyed physical infrastructure, as well as the security and social rights and economic resources of the country. These consequences are noted to have informed women rising to ensure peace and security in Liberia, even in the conflicts' after math.

The chapter also expounded on women's continuous efforts to empower and create political platforms for women to participate in decision-making processes that aim at advancing the

effective implementation of peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction, and development objectives for Liberia. Anchoring this analysis, the chapter identified that woman's individual and organizational agencies for peace was and remains the driving force for their participation, representation, inclusiveness in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture. Further locating the role of women in the framework of post-conflict, it was rationalized that the support for women organizations has gained grounds as a key ingredient for fostering Liberia's peacebuilding, reconstruction and development outcomes. Thus, the chapter asserted, builds on the realism that women's organizations are fundamental for strengthening and holding communities together, building peaceful co-existence and providing support for post-conflict interventions through their inclusion and gender integration into the processes.

Furthermore, the chapter engaged in historical and practical analyses of Liberian women's proactive role and contributions to peacebuilding and responded to three of the study's research questions. Through the analyses of women's narratives of peace experiences, the chapter highlighted areas of women's strategic interests across the different networks of organizations, noting how they in their diversity influence the distinctive peacebuilding activities. From the findings presented in the chapter, it was obtained that women and women's organizations differ in tact of their interests (practical and strategic), and the alacrity with which they adopt and work towards realizing these interests by engaging different strategies. It is nonetheless accurate to state that the goal for which they work, is to achieve sustainable peace short-term to long-term. As such, the chapter ascertained that the meaningfulness of women's efforts derives from their urgency for peace and security that is inclusive of all and takes into consideration the interests of the people, which explains their participation in the processes from the very onset. In this respect, it was construed that the primacy of women's peacebuilding efforts boils down to their being borne in the processes, given that their involvement in security sector reform; justice and reconciliation; socio-economic well-being; and governance and participation agendas, is transforming the political and socio-economic landscape of peace in Liberia.

Equally, the evidence of integrating Liberian women in the processes of post-conflict is indicative of how the rights to recognition and inclusivity can create not only the platform for collaboration and operationalization between women's organizations and the stakeholders,

but the sense of ownership of the agenda for long-term peace. On this note, the next chapter examines the role of the government, and local and international stakeholders in the implementation of Liberia's post-conflict agenda, with a focus on how it complements or creates the interpersonal platform for the support of women's involvement and participation in peacebuilding and decision-making processes.



## CHAPTER SIX

### COMPLEMENTARITY OF THE GOVERNMENT - LOCAL - INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND WOMEN'S ROLES IN LIBERIA'S PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE

#### 6.1. Introduction

Complementarity, as used in the context of this study, entails relational or interpersonal peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development engagements by government, local and international bodies to consolidate Liberia's post-conflict recovery agenda, as well as support women's agency and role in the process. Following the increase strategizing for women's recognition and participation in decision-making of peace and development agendas, it becomes vital to understand that the urgency and effectiveness of women's role cannot be achieved in isolation from the broader support accorded by the government and community of organizations. Besides, Molyneux's organizational theory underscores the need for change in the relationship between the state and society (in terms of collaboration and inclusive participation in policies) as one of the strategies for driving (in the case of this study) effective post-conflict processes. Therefore, while the primary focus here is the post-conflict context, the chapter retrospectively touches cord with the government of Liberia's position on women in public leadership prior to the proliferating contemporary discourses.

The specificity of conflict and post-conflict measures builds on the major and supporting roles different stakeholders. So, in assaying the complementarity of the roles assumed by stakeholders or institutions and women's quest for peace in Liberia, it is recalled that ECOWAS was at the forefront in the organization of almost all the peace talks to end the Liberian conflict cross-linking the periods of 1989 to 2003, as noted in chapter one. Furthermore, the negotiated settlement that led to the creation of a transitional government in Liberia under the provisional leadership of Ruth Sando Perry in 1996 was piloted by the Organization of African Unity, the United Nations, ECOWAS, and the United States of America. Besides this, ECOWAS deployed peacekeepers to create and ensure conditions for peace in Liberia in August 2003, followed by the establishment of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) in September of the same year to assist in the implementation of the CPA. In this

framework of support, various Media houses - including Radio Veritas, BBC, CNN and Reuters also played important roles through coverage of the story of women's struggle for peace in Liberia as a way of ensuring their voices echoed across the international space.

In conjunction with the preceding, this chapter appraises the role of the government, local, international institutions in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture, focusing on how it complements or strengthens women's agency and participation in the process. Thus, it delves into policies that have been emplaced by the government of President Ellen Johnson in furthering the recognition and involvement of women in decision-making and post-conflict development agenda and beyond. It also looks at how the gender politics of a female president impact on women's descriptive and substantive representation in decision-making and representative governance processes. Likewise, the chapter explores local and international bodies' assistances to the solidification of Liberia's peacebuilding and development objectives and the role of women therein. Building on this, the chapter draws from empirical data gathered through personal interviews with individuals representing the Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection (MoGCSP or Ministry of Gender); the Press Union of Liberia (PUL); and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Office of Gender Advisor (OGA). The presentation of this primary information is further supported with insights from focus group discussions and relevant literatures.

By considering the complementarity element of stakeholders post-conflict efforts, this chapter also aims to understand measures undertaken by the Liberian government and other stakeholders to the peace agreement, to ensure the implementation and domestication of UNSCR 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) in Liberia. Consequently, the chapter delves into the provisions on women's rights and recognition, gender equality and women's empowerment (among others), and the general outlook of the inclusivity component in the implementation of the post-conflict recovery processes in Liberia. In the main, the chapter aims to address two of the study's research questions:

- i. What roles do the state and government, local and international organizations play in peacebuilding, reconstruction and development, and how do they intermingle

with those of women’s organizations to ensure the sustainability Liberia’s post-conflict agenda and the strengthening of women’s roles?

- ii. To what extent has Liberia’s post-conflict gender politics of having a female president impacted on or defined the current positioning of women’s role and participation in politics and decision-making processes of the state?

## 6.2. Early recognition of Liberian women in public leadership

Following discourses of women’s peacebuilding role in the contemporary, especially in the African context, the controversy has often been the thinking that their recognition in the arena of public leadership is a recent phenomenon. However, as expounded in the literature review chapter, women leveraged political and socio-economic prowess prior to colonialism. While spared from the shackles of colonization, Liberia as far back as 1946 (during the colonial era in Africa) adopted and granted women suffrage to all Americo-Liberian women. Hence, Liberia was the first African country to accord women such recognition, support, and power to vote as well as stand or run for electoral office same as their male counterparts (Women Suffrage and Beyond 2011). In 1951, this right was extended to the indigenous women of Liberia. To this, UI-3 and UI-5 (July 2015) reiterated that before the conflicts in Liberia, women, especially the educated majority, were recognized and accorded leadership positions in the public and political tiers of society. Similarly, more women officiated in the private arenas and at the levels of rural and community leadership. The table below adapted from ‘Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership’ indicates that women in Liberia took up public and ministerial positions as far back as in 1948.

**Table 6.1: Liberian women in leadership – 1948 to 2003**

Years	Office/Position Held	Appointed Leaders
1948 – 1952	Secretary of State of Education	Ellen Mills Scarborough
1946 – 1956	Assistant Secretary of the Minister of Defence	Etta Wright
1951 – 1955 1963 – 1971	Executive Secretary to the President - Special Assistant to the President	(Edith) Mai Wiles Padmore

<b>1972 – 1976</b>	- Minister of Health and Social Security	
<b>1954 - 1977</b>	Liberia's Permanent representative to the UN	Angie Brooks-Randolph
<b>1953 – 1958</b> <b>1956 – 1973</b> <b>1955 –</b> <b>1956 &amp; 1961</b>  <b>1962 –</b>  <b>1965 &amp; 1966</b>  <b>1973 – 1975</b> <b>1975 – 1977</b> <b>1977</b>	Assistant Secretary of State - Assistant Attorney General - Delegate to the United Nations - Vice-Chairperson and chairperson of the Committee of Trust and Non-self-Government Territories - Chairperson on the Commission for Ruanda-Urundi - Vice-President and President of the Trusteeship Council - Ambassador-at-Large - Ambassador to the United Nations - Judge in the Supreme Court	Angie Elizabeth Brook-Randolph
<b>1970 –</b> <b>1977 –</b>	President of the UN general Assembly Associate Justice of the Supreme Court	Angie Brooks-Randolph
<b>1970 – 1973</b>	Mayor of Monrovia	Ellen A. Sandimanie
<b>1972 – 1973</b> <b>1977 – 1979</b> <b>1979 – 1980</b> <b>1980 –</b> <b>1992 – 1997</b>  <b>1997 –</b>	Secretary of State of Finance - Secretary of State of Finance - Minister of Finance - President of the National Bank - African Director of the United Nations Development Program - Leader of the Unity Party and Presidential Candidate	Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf
<b>1972 – 1978</b>	Assistant Minister of Education for Planning and research	Bertha Barker Azango

<b>1978 – 1980</b>	Deputy Minister of Education for Planning and research	
<b>1973 – 1977</b>	Minister of Health and Welfare	Dr. Kate Bryant
<b>1975 – 1979</b>	Minister of Agriculture	Florence Chenoweth
<b>1975 – 1978</b> <b>1977 – 1978</b> <b>1978 – 1981</b> <b>1981 – 1985</b> <b>1983 – 1984</b>	Minister of Post - Minister of Communication - Minister of Health and Social Security - Ambassador to the United Nations - Vice-President of the General Assembly of the United Nations	Hanna Abedou Bowen Jones
<b>1975 – 1989</b> <b>1991 – 1995</b> <b>1998 – 2001</b> <b>1999 – 2001</b> <b>2001 – 2002</b>	Deputy Minister of Economic Planning - Minister of Planning and Economy - Minister of Planning and Economy - Minister of Commerce and Industry - Minister of Planning and Economy	Amelia Ward
<b>1981 –</b>	Deputy Minister of State without Portfolio in Ministry of Presidential Affairs	Captain Veronica Peagor
<b>1981 –</b>	Minister of Health and Welfare	Dr. Kate Bryant
<b>1981 – 1987</b>	Minister of Health and Social Security	Major Martha Sandolo Belleh
<b>1985 – 1987</b> <b>1987 – 1990</b>	Minister of Commerce, Industry and Transport Minister of Post and Telecommunication	McLeod Darpoh
<b>1989 –</b> <b>1993 – 1994</b> <b>1994 – 1995</b> <b>2001 – 2003</b>	Vice-chairperson of the National Patriotic Front (Charles Taylor's Revolutionary Movement) of Liberia - First Secretary of the Council of State - Minister of Foreign Affairs (First in the Cabinet) - Minister of Gender Development	Dorothy Musuleng-Cooper

<b>1995 – 1996</b>	Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism	Victoria Refell
<b>1996 – 1997</b> <b>1998 –</b>	- Member of the Council of State - Advisor of President Charles Taylor	
<b>1996 – 1997</b>	Chief Justice of the Supreme Court	Frances Johnson-Morris
<b>1996 – 1997</b>	Acting President and Leader of the Government and Chairperson of the Council of State	Ruth Perry
<b>1997 – 1998</b>	Minister of Planning and Economy	Sandra Howard
<b>1997 – 2003</b>	Chief Justice of the Supreme Court	Gloria Musu Scott
<b>1998 – 2003</b>	Minister of Education	Evelyn White-Kandakai
<b>2001 – 2003</b>	Minister of Commerce and Industry	Cora Peabody
<b>2001 – 2003</b>	Minister of Post and Telecommunication	Emma Wuor
<b>2001 – 2003</b>	Deputy Minister of Finance for Revenue	Juanita Neal
<b>2001 – 2003</b>	Deputy Minister of Gender Development	Madam Lwopou Kandakai
<b>2001 –</b>	Mayor of Monrovia (till 2009)	Ophelia Hoff Saytumah
<b>2002 – 2003</b>	President Pro Tempore of the Senate	Grace Minor

**Source:** Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership (Republic of Liberia). Available at: <http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/Liberia.htm>

Acknowledging this realism is to say women’s course for recognition, inclusion and equal participation in the contemporary is powered and well-grounded in a history that conformed to the prominence of their leadership role, as earlier acknowledged by the Liberian government through its appointment of women to influential public positions. While such progress is increasingly being advocated for in present-day development agendas, note is taken that the case of Liberia has been and continues to be shaped by many factors like its conflict past and transformation of the political, socio-economic, human security and development landscape/dynamics. As earlier noted in this study, the Beijing Conference of 1995 happened at a time when Liberia was deep into conflict. In the spirit of echoing women’s voice and supporting Liberian women’s pursuit for peace, Amelia Ward (the then Liberian Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs) during this conference articulated that:

“... Since 1991, various women’s organizations in Liberia have been at the forefront of women’s rights and empowerment, gender awareness and peace advocacy, taking on different proactive actions and effecting several projects. ... But women remain in difficult circumstances and the Liberian society remains male-dominated ... and Liberian women are hopeful that the outcome of the discussions of the conference will positively change their lives ... Trusting that this conference will further advance the call for ‘greater investment in people and for a new action agenda to make women full partners with men in the socio-economic and political lives of communities’...we delightfully note that ‘sustainable human development also recognizes that not much can be achieved without a dramatic improvement in the status of women’...” (UNDP and UN Fourth World Conference on Women Secretariat. Statement Delivered by Hon. Amelia A. Ward, 1995).

From the vantage point, the holding of the Beijing Conference was an empowering event that gave a voice to women worldwide, Liberia in particular, because of the conflict and women’s already active efforts at resolution. According to UI-1 and UI-3 (July 2015), Beijing1995 served as a critical boost for women’s individual and organizational agency in Liberia, with a plus being the active position of Minister Ward that echoed the reality of their struggles and need for an inclusive platform in the affairs of the state of Liberia at that time. In consonance with this view, UI-5 also maintained that the outcome of the Beijing 1995 did, in fact, propel Liberian women to be more assertive in their pursuit of peace. Subsequent to the Beijing conference therefore, the Liberian Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs created a Women and Children Coordination Unit (which later was transformed to the Ministry of Gender and Development in 2001) and a Women’s Secretariat in 1995 and 1998 respectively. Tripp (2015: 95-98) avers that through assistance from different women’s NGOs and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), these programmes focused on addressing and managing women’s issues, activities and programmes. Likewise, it ensured the government amplified its gender mainstreaming measures and executed schemes identified as important to the advancement of women’s status in all spheres of life and society. In same manner of strengthening women’s efforts, Tripp (2015:96) draws to attention the element of the founding of a National Gender Forum in 1998, chaired by the then President Charles Taylor, and guided by a directive on defined ‘critical areas of concern’<sup>51</sup> described in the

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<sup>51</sup> The Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action 1995 necessitates for “governments, the civil society and international community, and the private sector to strategically take action in these twelve areas of concerns: 1)



Chapter III (44) of the BPfA. Departing from these preliminary developments, the Liberian government in its recent past to current post-conflict setting has continued to assume different strategic measures like the implementation of UNSCR 1325. In executing UNSCR 1325, the government embraced the national responsibility to promote and ensure women's role in society, which in turn is vital for the sustainability of its post-conflict agenda and yonder.

### **6.3. Liberian government in post-conflict development: enhancing women's peacebuilding and decision-making role**

The general insight from field consultations and literature is that in every state and society, the functionality or not of the government affects both women and men, either in terms of representation in decision-making and leadership processes, access to basic liveability, and the fundamental constitution of human rights and security. In settings and environments of post-war to be specific, governments as the main stakeholders charged with the implementation of established and defined post-conflict recovery agendas, are obliged to build, strengthen and support the capacity of state and society's institutions and human development at large. This undertaking entails instituting into practice policies that aim at increasing the agency and participation of all in the general processes of governance and reconstruction, particularly women as the marginalized of society. The inclusion of women serve as a strategic approach towards ensuring the attainment of transformative and sustainable processes. Thus, the government as the representative of the people is in the best position to build on practically inclusive decisions and policies that provide its citizenry with the forum to play a substantive role and support their interventionist efforts in realizing the objectives of democratic governance, durable peace, and development.

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The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women; 2) Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to education and training; 3) Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services; 4) Violence against women; 5) The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation; 6) Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources; 7) Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision making at all levels; 8) Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women; 9) Lack of respect for and inadequate promotion and protection of the human rights of women; 10) Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media 11) Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment; and 12) Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child" (BPfA 1995: 16-17).

According to UI-4 (July 2015) *“the fact that peace in Liberia has been maintained without any major conflict since the signing of the CPA in 2003, is evidence that the government of Liberia is making significant strides to ensure there is peace and security for all. And the government’s approach is based on an all-inclusive framework of implementation as implicitly recommended by the CPA.”* Landgren (2014) also notes that since the end of conflict in Liberia, there has been remarkable improvement in the socio-economic and political spheres of the country. As further stated by UI-4 (July 2015), the government’s operationalization of its post-conflict agenda has been and is guided by the country’s Constitution, wherein it proclaims in its Preamble to exercise *“natural, inherent and inalienable rights to establish a framework of government for the purpose of promoting unity, liberty, peace, stability, equality, justice and human rights under the rule of law, with opportunities for political, social, moral, spiritual and cultural advancement of our society, for ourselves and for our posterity”* (Constitution of the Republic of Liberia 1986).

### **6.3.1. Supporting women’s political participation and governance**

Central amongst the government’s steps to consolidating peace in Liberia was the respective holding and success of the 2005 and 2011 Multi-party elections, in which Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won both rounds as president-elect. The first major commitment by the president was to follow through her assurance of women’s empowerment, evident in the appointment of women to positions of leadership in ministerial offices (International Crisis Group 2011:2), indicated in Table 5.2 below. This is in conjunction with other key positions occupied by women since 2003, especially under her regime as the president. Further delivering on her promise for an inclusive Liberia, her appointed cabinet constitute a representative mix of both men and women, with women making up 30 percent according to Landgren (2014). Likewise, the cabinet constitution most notably, include civil society actors and contra political parties from different religious, political, tribal, and regional setups (International Crisis Group 2011:2). This development opportunity for political inclusion particularly conforms to the provision of Article 5(a) of the Constitution of Liberia (1986), which states that *“the Republic shall aim at strengthening the national integration and unity of the people of Liberia, regardless of ethnic, regional or other differences, into one body politic...”* Similarly, Landgren (2014) alludes that women account for a third of administratively appointed County Superintendents under the current post-conflict government of President Ellen Johnson. A

list of government and assistant Superintendents as provided by Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership, includes: Haja Washington (Bomi County 2004-2006); Gertrude Lamine (Gbarpolu County 2004-2012); Julia Duncan Cassell (Grand Bassa County 2004-2011); Rosalind Sneh (Grand Kru County 2004-2012); Nyenekon Beauty Snoh-Barcon (Montserrado 2006-2010); Catherine Watson-Khasu (Grand Cape Mount County 2004-2012); Melita Evelyn Gardiner (Maryland County 2008-); Edith Gongloe-Weh (Nimba 2009-2011); Lucia F. Herbert (Bong County 2011-2012); Etweda Cooper (Grand Bassa County 2012-); Elizabeth Dempster (Grand Kru County 2012-); Christiana Dagadu (Nimba County 2012-); Selena Polson Mappy (Bong County 2012-); Tenneh Kabadeh (Grand Cape Mount County 2012-); and Victoria Wolobah Duncan (Margibi County 2012-).

**Table 6.2: Liberian Women in Leadership – 2003 to Present**

<b>Years</b>	<b>Office/Position Held</b>	<b>Appointed Leaders</b>
<b>2003 – 2005</b> <b>2004 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Acting Foreign Minister	Una Kumba Thompson
<b>2003 – 2006</b>	Deputy Minister for Planning at the Ministry of Gender and Development	Madam Lwopou Kandakai
<b>2003 – 2006</b> <b>2006 –</b> <b>2006 – 2010</b> <b>2011 – 2013</b>	Minister at the Ministry of Gender and Development - Acting Minister of Commerce - Minister of Gender & Development - Minister of Labour	Vabah Kazaku Gayflor
<b>2003 – 2006</b>	Minister of Youth and Sports	Wheatonia Dixon-Barnes
<b>2005 –</b>	Vice-presidential Candidate for the 2005-elections	Amelia Ward
<b>2006-2017</b>	President of Liberia	Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
<b>2006 – 2008</b> <b>2008 –</b>	Minister of Finance Director of the African Department of the International Monetary Fund	Antoinette Monsio Sayeh
<b>2006 – 2007</b> <b>2007 - 2010</b>	Minister of Commerce and Industry Minister of Foreign Affairs	Olubanke King-Akerele
<b>2006 – 2007</b>	Minister of Justice and Attorney General	Frances Johnson-Morris

<b>2007 – 2008</b>	- Minister of Commerce and Industry	
<b>2008 – 2010</b>	- President of the Anti-Corruption Commission	
<b>Sept 2006 &amp; Feb 2007</b>	- Acting President during the absence of President and Vice-President	
<b>2006 – 2007</b>	Deputy Minister of Gender and Development	Annie Jones Demen
<b>2006 – 2012</b>	Deputy Minister in charge of Administration and Planning in the Ministry of Gender and Development	Benetta Joko Tarr
<b>2006 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism	Elizabeth E. Hoff
<b>2006 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Health and Social Welfare	Vivian J. Cherue
<b>2010 –</b>	Acting Minister of Health and Social Welfare	
<b>2006 – 2007</b>	Deputy Minister of Labour	Sedia Massaquoi-Bangoura
<b>2006 – 2007</b>	Minister of Youth and Sports	Jamesetta Howard
<b>2007 –</b>	Supreme Court Judge	Wolokollie
<b>2007 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Gender and Development	Annette Kiawu
<b>2006 – 2012</b>	Deputy Minister of Justice	Cieaneh D. Clinton-Johnson
<b>2006 – 2012</b>	Deputy Minister for Legal Affairs	Krubo Kollie
<b>2006 – 2012</b>	Deputy Minister of Post and Telecommunications	Estelle K. Liberty
<b>2007 – 2010</b>	Minister of Youth and Sports	Etmonia Davis Tarpeh
<b>2012 – 2014</b>	Minister of Education	
<b>2007 – 2011</b>	Deputy Minister in the Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs	Pearine Davis-Parkinson
<b>2007 – 2012</b>	Deputy Minister of Education	Hester Williams Catakaw
<b>2008 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Justice	Eva Mae Mappy Morgan
<b>2008 – 2010</b>	Minister of Commerce	Miata Beysolow
<b>2008 – 2012</b>	Deputy Minister of Public Works	Laurine Johnson

<b>2009 –</b>	UN Ambassador	Marjon Vashti Kamara
<b>2009 – 2012</b> <b>2010 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Finance for Revenue Acting Minister of Finance	Elfreda Tamba
<b>2009 – 2014</b>	Minister of Justice	Christiana Tah
<b>2010 – 2012</b>	Deputy Minister of Transport	Madam Kau Kidau Joseph
<b>2011 –</b>	Minister of Gender and Development	Julia Duncan-Cassell
<b>2011 – 2013</b> <b>2012 – 2013</b>	Deputy Minister of Administration Minister of Commerce and Industry	Aletha Brown
<b>2012 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs	Florence Dukuly
<b>2012 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Health and Social Welfare	Yah Zolia
<b>2012 –</b>	Minister of Agriculture	Dr. Florence Chenoweth
<b>2012 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Agriculture	Dr. Sizi Subah
<b>2012 – 2013</b> <b>2013 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Deputy Minister of Mines	Eudora Blay-Pritchard
<b>2012 – 2013</b>	Deputy Minister at the Ministry of State for Presidential Affairs	Elva Mitchell-Richardson
<b>2012 – 2013</b> <b>2013 –</b> <b>2013 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Lands, Mines and Energy - Deputy Minister of Justice - Solicitor General	Betty Lamin-Blamo
<b>2012 – 2014</b> <b>2014 – 2015</b>	Deputy Minister of Finance Minister of Transport	Angela Cassell-Bush
<b>2012 – 2014</b>	Deputy Minister of Justice	Victoria Sherman-Lang
<b>2012 – 2015</b> <b>2015 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Health and Social Welfare Minister of Health and Social Welfare	Dr. Bernice Dahn
<b>2012 – 2015</b> <b>2005 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports Assistant Minister of Tourism	Jacqueline Capehar
<b>2013 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Education	Hawa Goll-Kotchi
<b>2013 – 2014</b>	Deputy Minister of Justice	Wheatonia Dixon-Barnes
<b>2013 – 2014</b>	Minister of Public Works	Antoinette Weeks
<b>2014 –</b>	Deputy Minister of Commerce	Candace Eastman

2014 –	Deputy Minister of Research, Policy and Planning at the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection	Mardea E Martin-Wiles
2014 –	Minister Gender, Children and Social Protection	Julia Duncan-Cassell
2014 –	Deputy Minister of Gender	Sienne Abdul-Baki
2015 –	Deputy Minister of Transport	Jaunita Traub-Bropoleh
2015 –	Deputy Minister for Industry and Inspector General	Ellen O. Pratt
2016 –	Assistant Minister of Youth and Sports	Kula Fofana
2016 –	Foreign Minister	Marjon Vashti Kamara

**Source:** Worldwide Guide to Women in Leadership (Republic of Liberia). Available at: <http://www.guide2womenleaders.com/Liberia.htm> - Liberia: President Sirleaf Makes New Appointments in Government. Available at: [www.allafrica.com/stories/201411160368.html](http://www.allafrica.com/stories/201411160368.html)

In addition to opening the space for political inclusion, Article 5(a) of the Constitution of Liberia (1986) provisions that “...*the Legislature shall enact laws promoting national unification and the encouragement of all citizens to participate in government...*” Upholding this responsibility, the government of Liberia has taken additional steps to advance women’s leadership and representation in decision-making and development processes by adopting and launching a series of initiatives. For example, in July 2007, President Ellen Johnson- Sirleaf established the non-partisan Liberian Women’s Legislative Caucus (WLC), an initiative that comprised fourteen female legislators and parliamentarians from the different political parties. This group works in collaboration with women’s civil society organizations and the National Gender Machinery to ensure equal and increase representation and participation of women in government (Government of Liberia 2014:29). Their tasks include the advancement and protection of their social and economic rights in society through the formulation and adoption of laws, policies and government initiated programmes. Embracing this responsibility, the WLC in 2010 presented its Gender Equity in Politics bill, recommending that more women be accorded platform to participate in politics (Luppino and Webbe 2011:108). While this bill was to be considered after the 2011 elections, the fact that it had been tabled was a positive boost for women, especially as the number of women vying for political offices actually increased during the presidential elections in 2011 (Luppino and Webbe 2011:108; Government of Liberia 2014:27). Accordingly, reports of the 2011 electoral processes

document the participation of 102 women in total and three others as contenders for the office of the President of State. This participation was greatly supported by the Ministry of Gender and Development in association with other state institutions and women's organizations, as averred by UI-4 thus:

In the lead up to the 2011 elections, the Ministry alongside other state and women's organizations, worked in partnership to enhance women's participation in politics. The Ministry supported women candidates by providing them materials to enhance their own campaigns. And in preparation for the 2017 presidential elections, the Ministry has started identifying potential female candidates and having training with them on how to go about their campaigns properly and how to use their voices and skills positively to get what they want.

Consistent with this assertion, is the study observation that furthering women's political participation is of particular interests to women's strategic goal of empowerment and equality in the arena of public decision-making, especially given their trajectory in the pursuit of peace in Liberia. Besides, the context of women's involvement in politics and leadership are important for the functionality of democracy that should represent the composition of society as whole, more so, societies transitioning from conflict. More about advancing women's political leadership, the Government of Liberia in due consideration of the Gender Equality Law by WLC, approved the amendment of the Section 4.5 of the country's Elections Law in March 2014. Seen as a major step towards political inclusivity, this review basically endorsed gender equality and 30 percent quota of women's political participation in government and electoral processes (Carter 2014; Government of Liberia 2014:27). Over and above the fact that this amendment was and remains a great reinforcing factor for women's empowerment in politics, the women of Liberia are now pushing for a 50/50 representation in parliament (UI-4 July 2015). To empower and strengthen women's participation in the political scenery and generally; is a human, civic and constitutional right; a given reaffirmed by UI-4 to the effect that:

With the ongoing Constitutional Review process and the fact that women continue to be consulted on it, Liberian women must become more confident, proactive and persuasive in ensuring the recognition of their rights to equal participation and representation in all electoral and appointed public and private offices, as well as protection in political state of affairs in Liberia. Women's request for 50/50



representation has been on for 10 years now, but it kept being pushed under the table. First we pushed for 30/70 in the Constitution review, and since this proposal is in consideration, we are now more assertive in demanding for 50/50. Given our current demand, a Gender Parity Bill, supported by her Excellency has now been tabled before the Senate for due consideration in the Constitutional Review. Truth is, this 50/50 proposal has sparked debates and is viewed by some of our male counterparts as well as some women to be too ambitious, immense, and undemocratic a request. But as women, we cannot relent in our efforts, especially with the next presidential elections just around the corner.

Most research participants expressed the same view, highlighting the requisite for women's political representation in Liberia's emerging democracy. Particularly, UI-5 and UI-7 (July 2015) stressed the material value of having numeric and quality balance of women in leadership and governance processes. Having such symmetry remains one of the vehicles for awareness raising, recognitive and collaborative efforts, confidence and skills building, which are boosts for attaining sustainable post-conflict processes. Besides, one of the recommendations of from the five year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action 1995 on gender equality at the twenty-third Special Session of the UN General Assembly in June 2000, was a call on governments to "set and encourage the use of explicit short- and long-term time-bound targets or measurable goals, including, where appropriate, quotas to promote progress towards gender balance in all areas, and particularly in decision-making" (United Nations Report 2000). In recognition of this revision vis-à-vis the reality on the ground in Liberia, an important aspect alluded to by the research participants for was that women's organizations are indispensable role players in advocating and urging the fulfilment of such reference and promoting the meaningful participation of women in the arena of political and public leadership.

### **6.3.2. Strengthening women's participation in SSR and TRC processes**

As is the case with most post-conflict societies, the chronology of Liberia's post-conflict recovery agenda as presented in previous chapters, is in line with the modus operandi of the United Nations peace operations and peacebuilding architecture. These frameworks outline the activities that should follow the signing of peace agreements (in this case the CPA), beginning with security transition. In keeping with this, it trite to record that the Liberian

government, the UN peace operating unit, and civil society organizations in Liberia have been collaboratively engaged in overseeing the SSR processes and continue to assume the collective responsibility of ensuring security reform and transformation. Speaking of the progress achieved in this domain of security transition, Wild and Brown (2013:193) affirm there have been rational upsurge in the inclusion and representation of women across board the different national security service agencies - private and public alike, particularly the national police and armed forces operating institutions in Liberia. Likewise, Liberia has established a special protection unit for women and children within the police, largely operated by women and a few men principally trained to handle cases of gender based violence (Bastick and Whitman 2013:11). Tasked with providing women and children special alternative to justice institutions, this unit has greatly raised and increased community awareness on women's rights and issues of sexual violence (Bastick and Whitman 2013:11). As further maintained by Bastick and Whitman, it has also created an environment where victims of gender and sexual violence have become assertive in reporting such sexual offences perpetrated against them. The operationalization of the Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) programme in all the fifteen County capitals of the country (de Carvalho and Schia 2009:1) is indicative of progress in the arena of security developments in post-conflict Liberia. According to some participants from the FGDs, the presence of WACPS initiative provides them as well as young Liberian women with a sense of security. Moreover, narratives from the four FGDs (July 2015) denoted that SGBV is a reality for a number of women and girls in Liberia, as participants asserting that:

At the grassroots level where we are, domestic violence and rape is existent. As organizations of women working to empower women and girls and ourselves, we try to create an environment that is secured for us and our young girls through raising awareness, counselling, and capacity training. We also create some consciousness among our men and young men/boys, and through mobilization, dramas, role-play/acting, street theatres, solution/problem-solving workshops, we try to dissuade them from carrying out acts of rape and violence against women, while also encouraging the victims and survivors of such violence to report the cases to Women and Children Protection Units in the Counties, community elders, or the nearest police station. So far, we know of a few cases that were reported and some of the perpetrators were brought to book; other cases where not even investigated; and others are still pending on the long list of cases.

Aside from these narratives from FGD participants and personal observations, recognition of such endeavours were also made by viewing the pictures of past activities posted on the walls of these organizations' working spaces and training centres. The study also construed that by accomplishing different activities, women's organizations are in this manner facilitating the purpose and work of WACPS. Albeit this, the issue remains that WACPS, like most initiatives for change, is confronted by several drawbacks; including incoherence and the question of what happens after a crime has been reported (de Carvalho and Schia 2009:2), among others.

On several levels, the promise by the Liberian Government to empower women, has also seen the commissioning of strategies to foster women's participation within the agenda of reconciliation. In 2012 for example, the Government's peacebuilding office within the Ministry of Internal Affairs together with its partners and relevant stakeholders to the agenda for peace and transformation in Liberia, established an eighteen year (2012 to 2030) Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peacebuilding and Reconciliation. Being a multifaceted process, this policy is contextualized and defined by twelve thematic processes classified under three strategic action plans, namely:

- i. Accounting for the past;
- ii. Managing the present challenges; and
- iii. Planning for the future (the Ministry of Internal Affairs et.al 2012:2).

Thus, the Roadmap is concerned with the rebuilding of relationships destroyed as a result of the conflict, fostering coherence among different actors, as well as transforming social, economic and political institutions in order to ensure effective and sustainable reconciliation. The implementation of this strategic plan takes on a bottom-up and an inclusive people-centred approach to strengthen participation and ownership of the processes by Liberians (Ministry of Internal Affairs et.al 2012:8), and the women are key influencers in bottom-up processes. The structures implementing actions to sustain Liberia's national reconciliation and peacebuilding process are composed of the various Government Ministries and consortiums, UN agencies, and civil society organizations, including especially women

organizations at all levels of society. Looking at the Strategic Roadmap on Reconciliation, the ‘Women Psychosocial Recovery and Empowerment’ component is imperative for addressing women’s issues and needs; empowering them to access livelihood opportunities and build capacity; and fostering their role as key players in Liberia’s national peacebuilding agenda (PBSO/PBF 2013:9). The Liberian government as well as the United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office/Peacebuilding Fund (PBSO/PBF 2013:9) also underscore the importance of supporting women’s economic empowerment for the end result of restorative and social justice. With the Ministry of Gender as the principal implementer of the *Women Psychosocial Recovery and Empowerment*<sup>52</sup> project, UI-4 (July 2015) in agreement with the report by the Ministry of Internal Affairs et.al (2012), highlighted some areas of strategic developments to include:

- i. Implementation of socio-economic rehabilitation initiatives and programmes for women and girls engaged in commercial sex for subsistence purposes in Liberia’s major cities;
- ii. Advancement of the WACPS in Liberian National Police and the reinforcement of the Judicial systems’ role in according women victims and survivors of SGBV more access to justice;
- iii. Progress in ensuring that women across Liberia, especially the rural women have access to livelihood/economic opportunities, and building their capacity and entrepreneurial skills; and
- iv. Establishment and operationalization of women peace and dialogue commissions to mitigate and transform conflict matters, especially at the local level through traditional structures of conflict resolution like the peace/palava huts initiatives.

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<sup>52</sup> It is of great importance to underline that the ‘Women Psychosocial Recovery and Empowerment’ component of the Roadmap is just one among the government’s strategic policies and action plans for implementing Liberia’s national recovery and peacebuilding agenda in accordance with the directives of UNSCR 1325 on WPS.

### **6.3.3. Addressing women's interests through the adoption of national policies and strategies**

The objective of equality for women and mainstreaming gender perspectives in Liberia's policies are strategic to women's quest for peace. In the implementation of post-conflict processes, peacebuilding, reconstruct and development respectively, abounds the query of whether the state and other stakeholders have factored-in women's interests and needs. Deducing from research by Molyneux and Razavi (2003), the line of reasoning here is that since women generally contribute to the functionality of society and the aim of adopting and implementing post-conflict agendas is to consolidate peace and ensure sustainable processes, women's interests can therefore not be disregarded. Besides, addressing women's needs and interests advances their human, civic, political, social, and economic rights. The consequence of this for post-conflict processes is that stakeholders like the government must institutionalize or put in place policies to ensure these rights are absorbed and respected (Molyneux and Razavi 2003). Building on this view and the preceding ones, the study recorded that the Government of Liberia is committed to guaranteeing women's inclusion, participation and gender equality in decision-making and governance of the state. To this end, the Liberian government has formulated and adopted a number of national policies and development strategies that seek to integrate and place women at the centre of all national action plans and visions for attaining sustainable development. Some of these include: the Poverty Reduction Strategy, National Security Strategy, National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy, and Framework for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, the National Gender Policy of Liberia, and the National Gender-Based Violence Action Plan, among others.

In 2009, the Government of Liberia (2009:8) launched its National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325. The Liberian National Action Plan (LNAP) is a four years (2009-2013) amendable blueprint constituting a framework that builds on four priority areas of protection, prevention, participation, and empowerment/ promotion (Government of Liberia 2014:23). This plan is consistent with the government's mandate to promote active policies and agendas to empower and gender-mainstream women in decision-making and operationalization of the country's peacebuilding, reconstruction and development processes. According to UI-4 (July 2015), Liberia's institution of the NAP, as is the case with other UN

member states that have done same, builds on the widespread recognition of the need to strengthen the role of women in the context of international peace and security. From the revolutionary UNSCR 1325 on WPS, the scope has been widened to include: the protection of women from sexual and gender based violence; prevention of SGBV; the promotion and guarantee of human rights and security of women; and participation in peacebuilding and empowerment through the development of socio-economic and security action plans (UI-4, July 2015). The NAP supports the implementation of existent policies (Government of Liberia 2009:8), such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), among other selected policies congruent with the PRS summarized in Table 5.3 below. It is important to note that Liberia's NAP is intrinsically a strategic machinery<sup>53</sup> that can be variously utilized to advance the objective of equality and gender mainstreaming of women in Liberia's policies and programmes. Liberia's conflict past; the role women played in bringing back peace; the UNSCR 1325 mandate for every country that has signed and ratified its optional protocols to advance women's participation and reinforce security for women and girls; as well as Liberia's vision for sustainable peace, rationalizes the decision by the government to implement the resolution.

**Table: 6.3: Liberia's National Policies and Development Strategies**

National Policies and Strategies	Aims and Objectives
<p><b>Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) of (2006–2008; 2008–2011 and 2012–2018)</b></p>	<p>The PRS is conceived around four focused areas of implementation, which are relevant to the context of post-conflict Liberia. These include the building of sustainable peace and security; revitalization of the economy; ensuring and upholding governance and the rule of law; and infrastructural reconstruction and provision of basic services, as vital for Liberia's sustainable</p>

<sup>53</sup> This is in the sense of it being used as a tool for: monitoring and evaluation of programmes; strengthening of coordination and capacity of the Ministry of Gender in implementing policies; Promoting partnerships and strategic linkages among different partners and stakeholders; ensuring the process of data collection, storage and analysis; enhancing donor commitment to Liberia; strengthening monitoring and watchdog role of civil society; and ensuring accountability and ownership of the different action plans (Government of Liberia 2009: 9).

	<p>development. Also, the PRS espouses the <b>directive of gender equality and capacity building, featuring women’s economic empowerment as a one of its interweaving strategies for economic revival</b> (International Monetary Fund 2012).</p>
<p><b>National Gender Policy (NGP)</b> – published by the Ministry of Gender in 2009</p>	<p>NGP constitutes a ten-year policy plan that aims to promote and support gender mainstreaming, the empowerment of women and participation of susceptible groups in Liberian national development processes. <b>The policy also targets managing the problem of the marginalization of women; reinforcing strategies for empowerment of women and girls in the sustainable and equitable development of Liberia; instituting and supporting gender responsive structures and development mechanisms that are accessible, involve, and benefit both women and men equally</b> (Ministry of Gender and Development 2009; Government of Liberia 2014).</p>
<p><b>National Food Security and Nutrition Strategy (FSNS)</b> – endorsed by the Government of Liberia in 2008</p>	<p>FSNS is a cross-sectoral strategy that aims to provide and guarantee the steady access to food for all Liberians to ensure their nutritional needs and healthy liveability. This strategy particularly focuses on the needs of the nutritionally vulnerable groups in society who are food insecure like the elderly with insufficient or no means of sustenance and livelihood, households affected by HIV, orphans, as well as female-</p>



	<p>headed households. The strategy patently prioritizes the needs of Liberian women, given their important and indispensable role in making sure there is food security through production and marketing of food produce, as well as preparation of it for nutritive upkeep of their households (Ministry of Agriculture 2008).</p>
<p><b>National Gender-Based Violence Action Plan (2006–2011), and the National Plan of Action on Gender-Based Violence (2011 -2015) to Prevention</b></p>	<p>The plan has as its main aim the prevention and response to acts of gender-based violence, noting that the sustainability of Liberia’s peace and development processes is also greatly dependant on whether Liberians do have access to justice. To attain this, <b>WACPS was instituted and aims to provide response to abused and violated women and children; a Sexual and Gender-based Violence Crimes Unit at the Ministry of Justice was created and is responsible for prosecuting SGBV cases, and safeguarding the protection of women and children victims of sexual abuse; a new Rape Law with increased penalty for rape offenders was passed; and a Criminal Court “E” was also established and charged to adjudicate sexual offense cases. Also mechanisms are in place to pass the Bill on Domestic Violence (Government of Liberia 2014).</b></p>
<p><b>Gender Equality and Women’s Economic Empowerment Programme (GEWEE) – A Joint Programme of the Government of Liberia and the United Nations (2009–2013)</b></p>	<p>The Joint Programme on GEWEE aims at reducing poverty and achieving gender equality for all in Liberia, especially women. Its areas of focus include: supporting the establishment of</p>

	<p>Gender Sensitive Policies and Coordination Mechanisms; building the capacity of the Ministry of Gender Development, line Ministries, and Civil Society in order to ensure functionality, commitment, and effective implementation of gender sensitive policies and programmes; and <b>supporting the implementation of initiatives that prioritize the empowerment of women</b> (UNDP 2014). In addition, GEWEE is aligned to the PRS with particular attention on the pillars of economic recovery and governance and the rule of law.</p>
<p><b>Government Land Policy and Land Policy Reform for Women in Liberia</b> 2013</p>	<p>Liberia’s Land Policy aims to improve the day-to-day lives of all Liberians by doing away with the apprehension and feeling of uncertainty over land rights. The policy focuses on four different kinds of land rights, including Government Land, Public Land, Customary Land, and Private Land. On a specific note, it seeks to ascertain that lands governed by customary laws and practices are accorded equal protection as private lands. Given that the land rights of men are often protected more than those of women, <b>the Policy seeks to safeguard the provision of equal protection to the land rights of women and men, as well as integrate women’s land rights into the national formal legal framework</b> (Republic of Liberia Land Commission 2013; Government of Liberia 2014).</p>

These policies are just a selective summary among the wide range of action plans adopted by the Liberian Government towards the attainment of its defined sustainable peace and development goals. Also, it is worth noting that the policies are in line with the country's vision of Liberia Rising 2030, which aim is to metamorphose Liberia's economic and socio-political landscape by transforming it into a middle-income country by 2030. Achieving this is greatly dependent on the implementation of the above policies, among others that aim to build on inclusive gender-responsive and equal processes. In view of the fore-discussed, the study perceived that the Ministry of Gender is a key partner, relevant stakeholder and implementer<sup>54</sup> of the Government of Liberia's action plans. The study also noted that her engagements and efforts to empower and promote women's rights and involvement in peacebuilding are cross-linked with the implementation strategies of both public and private organizations.

Conforming to the references of UNSCR 1325 and the development strategies in place for Liberia, the MoGCSP works closely with women organizations and initiatives to integrate and domesticate nationally adopted policies. For example, the Ministry maintains a list of over 75 women groups with whom she works and partners with to broaden their capacity and provide sectoral clearance to enhance their functionality and efforts to solicit funds (UI-4 July 2015). Also, the Ministry of Gender has gender focal points in all government ministries which she uses to advocate for the recognition and consideration of women's needs and interests in development programmes. More to this, UI-4 pinpointed that the MoGCSP administrates local offices in every County, which are managed by representatives and equipped with tools to help them sustain their responsibilities, as well as mission to empower and build the capacity of women and women organizations in the Counties through collaborative working relations. UI-10, UI-11 and UI-12 concurred with this assertion and related that their involvement in the design and implementation of the programmes organized by the Ministry is often played out through their active role in sensitizing and organizing awareness activities.

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<sup>54</sup> Other relevant partner, stakeholder and implementers of Liberia's national plans and policies include the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health, etc.

Article 6 of the Liberian Constitution (1986) provisions that *“the Republic shall, because of the vital role assigned to the individual citizen under this Constitution for the social, economic and political wellbeing of Liberia, provide equal access to educational opportunities and facilities for all citizens to the extent of available resources...”* Delivering on this requirement, the Gender Ministry has assumed the responsibilities to work closely with institutions and ensure that such constitutional provisions as well as policy guidelines are mainstreamed to include a gender component for the rights, empowerment, protection, and promotion of women in Liberia (UI-4 July 2015). On the education element, the Gender Ministry together with other government units oversee and support programmes that aim at encouraging and helping girls to attend school and be retained there till they complete their education through different government specialized initiatives and scholarship schemes (UI-4 July 2015). Education is a key instrument for achieving long-term development goals, since it empowers both women and girls by building their self-confidence and equipping them with knowledge skills and capacities to involve in decision-making and leadership processes in their various communities. Exemplifying on this point, UI-4 (July 2015) articulated that:

The government runs an adolescent girls’ programme that brings young girls together to educate and train them in basic training skills and other activities that would enhance their academic background. For those who do not have an academic background, we have creative activities like beads making to support and assist them enhance their own livelihood (for example the beads I am wearing was made by some of the young women we work with). Besides investing in the education and welfare of young girls and women, the Ministry is working with different women groups, especially the rural women groups to broaden their capacity and ensure they can sustain themselves. Also we are working in collaboration with other government ministries and institutions to promote women’s participation in politics, especially now that we are identifying the next presidential candidate.

Central to our role as a government entity, is the goal to ensure national policies on women are practically domesticated and mainstreamed in the different policy documents. This is necessary because not including them in policy documents actually challenges the goal of women’s empowerment and participation in the agenda of peace reconstruction and development of Liberia. In addition to this and through our collaboration with the Ministry of Health, we are also working with Ebola survivors and people with HIV, especially women and girls to ensure they are not discriminated against. Talking of health issues, Liberia was known to have one of the highest maternal

mortality percentages, but today, we can tell a relatively different story given the decrease in these rates in recent years and Liberia's continuous efforts to resolve this problem long-term.

Drawing from what constitutes women's gender interests as enunciated by Molyneux's organizational theory and discussed in chapter three, this study translated such policy assurances on the part of the Liberian government as addressing the long term interests of women and women's organizations. This is in the sense that it bequeaths women that recognition and platform to not only capture and represent both the silent and assertive voices of their own gender, but also contribute to Liberia's strategic agenda of sustainable peace and development. In further underpinning these relational policies and efforts to support women's agency and participation in the national recovery and peacebuilding processes, attention is drawn to the fact that substantial progress has been attained in several areas of the national plans that have been (and are being) implemented in Liberia. A case in point would be some of the notable outputs of the Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment policies by the Government of Liberia and the United Nations, which include:

- i. Mainstreaming gender equality into Liberia's national plans both at the government and local levels, as well as into the governments sector policies;
- ii. Strengthening policy coordination mechanisms to ensure gender equality and women's empowerment, as well as civil society's capacity to establish diverse platforms for advocating gender equality;
- iii. Boosting women's vocational, marketing and business economic abilities to shift from informal businesses to sustainable formal cost-effective businesses, thereby improving their participation in the formal economic sector;
- iv. Increasing and enhancing girls and women's access to formal education and vocational training and improving employment opportunities for them;
- v. Strengthening the capacity of rural women in the agricultural sector by supplying them with seeds, providing agricultural training and storage facilities for produce, and enforcing the land rights of rural women as well as their social protection; and

- vi. Ensuring increased accessibility of viable micro finance services and business loans to rural women to support the operationalization and sustainability of their economic activities (UNDP 2014; Government of Liberia 2014).

#### **6.3.4. The woman president factor and the advancement of women's position**

While assessing the role of the Liberian government in implementing its post-conflict agenda, the resourcefulness of the gender politics of having a woman president on the advancement of women's leadership and participation in peacebuilding processes was also taken into consideration. Intrinsically, the inquiry focused on the element of having a woman president vis-à-vis gender or women policies; women's involvement in decision-making affairs; and the inquiry about its translation (or not) into the advancement of women's interests, from the viewpoint of descriptive and substantive representation. Simply defined, women's descriptive representation refers to women's presence in politics, while their substantive representation refers to the promotion of women's interests (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008:394). In addition, Childs and Krook (2009:125) highlight that in research, the consideration of "whether who holds office (descriptive representation) influences or affects the types of policies introduced and endorsed (substantive representation) remains a focal concern ...and for some gender scholars, the inquiries "Do women in politics make a difference (descriptive representation) and 'Do women act for women/how do women act for women (substantive representation)" or bring about policy changes, correspondingly delineate the concepts. Exemplifying these definitions in the Liberian context entailed the depiction of descriptive representation as women standing for women through consecutive popular votes for a woman Head of State and their push for at least the 30 percent quota representation of women in parliament. While, the characterization of substantive representation embodied moving beyond political composition to exactly how President Sirleaf and the women representatives in parliament act in or for the interest of Liberians whom they represent (especially the women) in a manner that is responsive towards them<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Further insight on the different forms of representation, the substantive in terms of acting in or for...in a responsive manner, see Pitkin H.F (1967). *The Concept of Representation*. Berkeley: University of California Press; and Pitkin H.F (1969). *Representation*. Atherton Press: New York.

In the framework of the Liberian experience, the study construed the extent gender gaps in leadership and the fact that more men occupy leadership positions than women. Therefore, recapping from field engagement with women, it was observed that women's general and initial thoughts of supporting and voting into office a woman president was influenced by the concept of descriptive representation, taking into consideration their expectations of how it would accrue benefits to the womenfolk. For example, UI-10 (July 2015) explained that the vying of a female leader for political position of authority (especially the presidency of the state) or her election thereof, created expectations of how valuable it would be for the women populace, particularly in light of addressing women's interests and appointments to or occupancy of public offices. Marie O'Reilly (2016) in a commentary piece "The real impact of a female president?... not only expresses same sentiments, but highlights some long term gains of having a female president to include the increase in women's leadership and public role in democratic societies. Some of the impacts of having a female head of state on the promotion of women's public leadership, decision-making roles, and interests in Liberia are voiced in the excerpts below from different participants, as follows:

I can say for a sure is that having a woman as the president of the country has increased the number and participation of women in decision-making and public leadership positions ... and this is actually an inspiration for younger women to strengthen their education, career objectives, development and position in society and dreams of a better tomorrow for themselves, communities and society. However, I cannot say many things have changed for the better because women are in charge (UI-5 July 2015).

Since electing a female president into office, women are now more vocal than before about issues, especially those that challenge their rights as humans, women, and leaders of their communities. While they might not have political positions as they ought to and wish for, women are making change in their communities (UI-2 July 2015). So, having a female president and contemplating on the issues of gender in other countries, I will say the case of Liberia provides a soft ground on gender issues. What I mean by this is that for so long government have resisted discourses on gender concerns until recently in the last five years or less when they began opening up to the idea of women can also be leaders. But same cannot be said for Liberia, as women, following the first civil war up to post-2003 and the election of a woman president, have always sought to promote gender policies. Under the current leadership of President Sirleaf, I can say that Liberia has one of the best gender frameworks. While there is still much to be done, Liberia is getting there gradually ... women in the police service in Liberia is one of the leading in



the world - seventeen to twenty percent, and the average of women's participation in police in the world is about ten percent (UI-7 July 2015).

It is logical to concur with Bell's (2016) shattering the glass ceiling analogy of the empowering sway a woman in an executive position of power has been encouraging women to be more involved in politics. This is especially fundamental for a post-conflict society like Liberia, where righting the wrongs of war by ensuring inclusive processes for sustainable peace and development is imperative. This study opined that for much of Liberia's post-conflict history, the office of the president coupled with the fact of her being a woman, provides a degree of theoretical and practical uplift to women's peacebuilding efforts that offers them a sense of relieve that their struggle to resolve the Liberian conflict and bring about peace was and remains visible. Establishing institutional machineries and policies that advance the involvement and participation of women in peacebuilding, public leadership and decision-making, and the development of Liberia as a nation-state, are some of the approaches emplaced by the president's office towards addressing women's interests. UI-4 (July 2015) particularly noted that the domestic violence law and anti-rape law (which is the most comprehensive in Africa) and a fast-track special court to deal specifically with gender-based violence, was instituted and endorsed by the president. Several other policies like the national gender policy and that on promoting girls' education and retention in school, have also been decreed and promoted by the president. In discussing the economic welfare of Liberian women, many participants from the FGDs also told of the president's role in the empowerment of women in promoting the informal female traders (also known as the market women) by revamping and building several marketplaces throughout the country. These responses reveal that the office of President Sirleaf has so far adhered to some of the assurances she made to the country and its people during her 2006 and 2012 inaugural speeches, wherein she stated:

“My Administration shall thus endeavour to give Liberian women prominence in all affairs of our country. My Administration shall empower Liberian women in all areas of our national life. We will support and increase the write of laws that restore their dignity and deal drastically with crimes that dehumanize them. We will enforce without fear or favour the law against rape recently passed by the National Transitional Legislature. We shall encourage families to educate all children, particularly the girl child. We will also try to provide economic programs that enable Liberian women - particularly our market

women - to assume their proper place in our economic process (Inaugural Address of H.E. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf January 16, 2006) ... Patriots believe that equality of opportunity applies to all citizens, regardless of tribe or ethnicity, regardless of geographic or economic status, and regardless of sex. My administration remains particularly committed to achieving equality for women and girls in all areas of life: education, business, and in the family itself” (Inaugural Address “The Values of a Patriot” by Her Excellency Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf President, January 16, 2012).

Consistent with the fore-discussed, study recognized from the inaugural excerpt and references from UI-5 and UI-7 that the fact of women acting for women is noticeable in the government of President Sirleaf and resonates with a component of substantive representation. The establishment of the country’s gender frameworks, the introduction of gender bills by women legislators (as earlier indicated in this study), the institution of the Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) and programme, the passing of the domestic violence law and anti-rape law, and the launch of distinct National Policies as outlined on Table: 6.3 above, among others, are all instances of such representation. Besides, Franceschet and Piscopo (2008:395) in their research on women’s substantive representation in Argentina, contend that acting for women happens when female legislators introduce bills that promote women’s interests, set in motion gender perspectives into legislative discourses, and network with women both within and outside of parliament. This is an opinion that has been severally articulated in this chapter, which reasserts the Liberian experience of their legislative representative action. Nonetheless, the question relating to legislators’ networking outside the parliament nationally abounds, and political and logistical concerns also arise as to whether their actions—the process of initiation the bills or laws, actually translate into operative policy changes nationwide, especially at the grassroots level. Along the lines of these looming inquiries the study revisited the discourse quotas in Liberia and legislators in parliament. Centring on this, it was observed that research denotes that quotas are likely to and in some cases increase women’s leadership in the political sphere, especially with a female at the echelon of state government (Pande and Ford 2011; Bell 2016).

Generally, discussing the politics of having a woman president vis-à-vis the advancement of women’s interests and representation draws attention to the fact that ensuring equitable participation of women in affairs of leadership is central to making governance and decision-making processes inclusive. Often, there are assertions to the effect that the significant upsurge

in the descriptive representation of women in parliament or legislature is likely to increase the prospects of accomplishing/improving the substantive representation of women ... However, this does not also guarantee the representation of women's interests ... Furthermore, a representative (given that the context here is women) does not have to be a woman in order to act in women's interests (Celis 2008). Recapping from field narratives, it was acknowledged that President Sirleaf is one of the politicians that supported the draft 30 % quota equal representation bill of women in decision-making, among others. Notwithstanding, the challenges of equitable representation of women in the Liberian parliament remain eminent, especially in light of the decrease in the number of female legislators from 14 percent to 11.65 percent in post-2005 and 2011 election phases respectively. This challenge as explicated in the seventh chapter of this study, is way below the thirty percent quota women are vying for. Besides the significant underrepresentation of women in parliament, the disunity existent in the Liberian legislature, where twelve parties are represented in both houses and majority of are men with just a few legislators from the ruling Unity Party, is said to also delay or constrict the adoption of proposed bills (Adams 2017:184 & 191). But beyond the influence of these challenges, the study ascertained progress in the post-conflict gender climate of Liberia under the administration of President Sirleaf.

According to UI-5 (July 2015), a woman at the rudder of political leadership and state decision-making, has the propensity to sway policy outcomes. This is because women have a stronger sense of appeal in a number of instances to resolve conflicts and bring about peace, seeing as Liberia is a case in point. Apparently, such a peacebuilding example was exercised by President Sirleaf, as recounted by UI-5 in the excerpt below.

Very recently there have been a very difficult conversation about a very drastic reform of the educational sector of Liberia. It has not been the kindest because of different confrontations about it, with students also adding their voices to the debate through strike actions. So, one day there was a national event and the students were protesting in the streets and upon noticing President Sirleaf's vehicle with her in it, the students immediately surrounded her car. The last time something like this happened in this country, people were shot. But in this instance, she walked out of the car and asked the students to walk with her and discuss what the matter was without disrupting the rest of the society, and they had a conversation that is continuing today. What the president did was a form of building peace, while at the same time sending a message down to the

students that the matter could and can be resolved peacefully. I understood that she viewed the students as her children and believe her gesture was a strong message that introduced a peacebuilding paradigm to resolving the matter.

Whereas this narrative and the preceding are averred to be a selected paradigm of how the gender politics of having a female president impacts women's leadership roles and peacebuilding objectives in Liberia, the study generally observed that most of the research participants were reluctant in their response to this particular inquiry. Albeit this, the study deciphered that significant strides towards complementing and fostering women's participation in decision-making, public leadership, and addressing their gender interests in Liberia, intersect with the representativeness of the female leader factor. Likewise, the study found that the reality of President Sirleaf's political profile, coupled with women's earlier and incessant peacebuilding role and support of her office through voters polls, have created a platform for wider considerations that women can be and are also capable leaders - that is - gradually changing gendered cultural beliefs and stereotypes that view men as more abled political leaders than women. Further considering the interpersonal support platform for women's role in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture, the study noted that the theory of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development also underpins the importance of advancing complementarities and coordination amongst the different stakeholders and actors involved in post-conflict processes. This is to say post-conflict efforts by the Liberian government to enable and advance women's interests (practical and strategic) and their role and agency in decision-making and leadership are also reinforced by other local and international actors.

#### **6.4. Local and international organization's support for women's agency and peacebuilding role in Liberia**

Building peace in post-conflict societies comprises diverse groups of internal and external actors/stakeholders playing different intersecting roles for the common goal of consolidating peace in the long term. Sustaining efforts to attain post-conflict recovery agendas through coordination of activities and complementary roles, buttress the objectives of peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development as well as efforts by women to be actively involved. Therefore, in contextualizing how the roles of other actors in the Liberian post-conflict

processes impact and reinforce the participation of women in peacebuilding, this study engaged dialogues with a local media outlet - the Press Union of Liberia (PUL) and the United Nations Mission in Liberia Office of Gender Advisor (UNMIL-OGA).

#### **6.4.1. Local support for women's role: the case of the PUL**

From the role played by different public and private media houses during Liberian civil wars, there is no gainsaying the significant position of the media as one of the key actors in socio-political and democratic transition to peace processes. In Liberia as in other democratic societies, public opinions are typically shaped by the media, in that, it creates platforms for political activities by the civil society, public debates/deliberations and awareness about issues of importance to the functionality and accountability of state and society (Reeve 2011). In the recent past and current dispensation of Liberia's transition to peace history, a critical point of attention has been the position of women in the transformation and reconstruction of Liberia, which as earlier discussed in chapter five is correspondingly being promoted through community radio programmes by a number of women organizations. The interview with the Press Union of Liberia revealed the role it plays in furthering the recognition and role of women in its present post-conflict context. Speaking of post-conflict and the need for inclusivity as it pertains to the subject of women, UI-5 (July 2015) specified that:

Post-conflict is and should be aimed at defining and implementing activities that will prevent the reoccurrence of conflict, as well as the building of an inclusive and peaceful Liberian society, where women's contributions are considered and promoted at all levels. Inclusiveness is a key issue in showing that the people (civil society) who are part of Liberia in whichever way should be in a position to be confident that they cannot be excluded or denied the benefits of being citizens and owners of their own national processes for peace. Speaking of inclusiveness, it should, especially in the context of Liberia include Liberian women who stood at the forefront to safeguard the peace we have today and have continued to influence and play different roles in society. Ensuring that women part and parcel of decision-making and peacebuilding is therefore very crucial to consolidating our agenda for sustainable peace and development as Liberians (UI-5, July 2015).

In the arena of conflict and post-conflict, the media generally has a vital role to play as a medium through which information is disseminated and literature is replete with this. However, a review of how their role as a local actor in Liberia's post-conflict processes

complements and promotes the interests and leadership position of women in society is important for this study. Research alludes that female correspondents are rationally represented in the present post-conflict Liberia media sector and radio programmes, especially those operational by means of international sponsorship, are quite vocal on issues of SGBV and discourses that pinpoint the need and importance gender-equal opportunities (Reeve 2011). Accordingly, majority of the PUL steering committees are chaired by women, since the organization believes that women have a significant role to play in the media (UI-5 July 2015). Beyond this, he stressed that a key component of their strategic direction for the next five years, is to amplify the role of women in the media by strengthening their participation and voices. Notably, there are several media/radio stations running programmes that particularly focus on discussions and debates aimed at promoting issues involving women. For example, the Liberian Women Democracy Radio works to strengthen the voices of women in different communities (even though men also speak on these radio forums) and different media houses across Liberia have women in key role positions (UI-5 July 2015). Media initiatives that accord women the space to voice their views and deliberate matters of importance to women, underpin women's role and rights to equally contribute to the transformation and development of society. This explains why in Liberia, women are determinedly investing in empowering and building the capacity of fellow women through storytelling/play broadcasts and print media. Particularizing on this, UI-5 (July 2015) shared that:

The journalist of the year during the 2015 PUL's annual award evening was a woman. Several reasons made her to win the award of the best reporter in several of the categories and best journalist of the year. Her stories were ground breaking, community impacting, and actually inspired increased women's participation in the development of their communities. More so, the selecting committee for this prestigious award was gender balanced, comprising both men and women, which is to say she was selected based on merits for her excellence.

Looking at the present development framework, the media has advanced into the domain of peacebuilding, underpinning among its many undertakings the participation and role of women in society. Aside its role as one of the local institutions enhancing the role of women in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture, the study generally observed that Liberia's continuing post-conflict realization cannot be told without underscoring the notable role of the media,

especially in the arena of educating the public and raising awareness. From this preceding, it is essential to also accentuate that consolidating democracy is central to post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development processes, and within the pluralist liberal democracy discourse, the media as the ‘fourth estate/power<sup>56</sup>’ in society are guardians of democracy and public interest (Carlyle 2013). This is to say the media, as affirmed by UI-5, is part and parcel of transformation processes in society, likewise playing the role of promoting national unity and assisting to strengthen post-conflict processes in Liberia, as seen in PUL’s support and promotion of women’s agency and role in society, among other responsibilities and contributions.

In transitioning democracies, particularly those emerging from conflicts, strengthening the efforts and position of women in decision-making is quite imperative, UI-5 expressed, and the role men play in this regard is also crucial. Departing from the media focus, he recounted from his interactive experience with his fellow men that Liberian men are supportive of women’s role in society, despite the ever present challenge of patriarchy. To him, the complementarity of gender roles is an intrinsic part of the development at large. Therefore, the fact that Liberia was able to consecutively elect a female leader under universal suffrage, evidences that both women and men voted the president to power. Stating as a point of fact, he also purported that *there were a lot of men in positions of influence in the various communities across the country who advocated for men to support a change in Liberia’s history by voting for a female president to continue the transformation that women had already initiated through their conflict resolution role in Liberia.* Moreover, in consideration of the Bi-Senatorial election that was held December 2014, UI-5 asserted that one of the most contested seats won by a woman was an achievement that was equally supported by men. While the question - why just one woman loomed; the study also established from participants’ responses and observation, the increased openness of both genders to the election and appointment of women representatives into positions of power nationally and locally at grassroots.

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<sup>56</sup> In the organization of state structures for democratic consolidation, there is the legislative, executive, and judiciary power; and the media is given the accolade of the fourth power in the framework of liberal democracy theory of separation of powers.



It must be noted that the measures that underprop much of the involvement and participation of women in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture emanates from the inclinations of actors involved in the processes. The importance and role of local actors in consolidating post-conflict agenda in association with the efforts of other stakeholders cannot be overstated. Consequently, local participation is an imperative component in post-conflict engagements. Besides, comprehensive volumes of practical relevance within the context of peace research express the need and centrality for inclusive processes that are anchored on local ownership to enable long-term and sustainable peacebuilding and development. While recognizing this importance, literature and practical experience also call attention to the supportively vital role of the international community in ensuring the realization of post-conflict agendas. More so, the UNSCR 1325 on WPS requires same of the international community, obliging them to be decisive in ensuring that women are active participants in the processes, hence the interview with a UNMIL-OGA participant.

#### **6.4.2. International support for women's efforts: the case of the UNMIL-OGA**

The United Nations as an international organization of states concerned with issues of world peace and security, often assumes different interventionist roles in conflict and post-conflict situations. Summarizing from the dialogue with the participant from UNMIL - Office of Gender Advisor (OGA), it was established that the Liberian conflict situation, like most others, was subject to external influences from different organizations, states, and agencies. The study briefly, but specifically explored the role of UNMIL, recognizing that it was created by Security Council Resolution 1509 in 2003 to support the ceasefire agreement and address human rights and governance concerns in Liberia (UNMIL 2003). Being the first of its kind with clear directives for implementation processes that particularly pay attention to gender mainstreaming of UNSCR 1325 on WPS and UNSCR 1820 on Sexual Violence, the role of UNMIL-OGA complements and strengthens that of Liberian women in the arena of peacebuilding in several ways.

In consideration of its remits in Liberia, UI-7 clarified that the UN Mission through the OGA has so far worked on integrating a gender perspective in the execution and management its mission, especially the security pillar and policies of Liberia's post-conflict recovery

architecture. As a practical measure, UNMIL's mandate of gender mainstreaming covers the parameters of ensuring respect and protection of human rights; adherence to the rule of law standards; inclusive free and peaceful democratic elections; and the support of women and girls involvement in the implementation of post-conflict processes. In this given, UNMIL-OGA facilitates the implementation of UNSRC 1325 and other similar provisions by working with the government to support national programmes in the area of women, gender and peacebuilding (UI-7 July 2015). In alliance with national counterparts like the legislature, NGOs, government ministries, and other international agencies like Kvinna till Kvinna—a Swedish organization, and UN Women, UNMIL-OGA uses a gender lens in all its activities to see that women involve/contribute and most importantly benefit from the governance of peacebuilding and reconstruction processes. Elaborating this point, UI-7 stated:

UNMIL-OGA is currently more engaged (unlike before) in ensuring that women's participation, issues, and interests are integrated into the ongoing constitutional review process that started in 2014 as a framework for governance and development. One of our underpinning goals in this framework is to strategically promote the unity of women to think directly on the key issues around their position in the review process and how they can join forces to ensure the amendments are truly beneficial to women. So, we are at present working in partnership with other UN agencies to ensure that the Ministry of Gender, the women legislative caucus, and the Women NGOs, work together as we implement the framework to consolidate democratic governance and decentralization policies to enable that women take on this opportunity to become more engaged in the processes. Hence, the starting of the Women of Liberia Constitutional Review Taskforce, which unlike before, has now brought women to work together on a core/common strategy to fight for their rights in the new constitution and encourage their participation in political processes.

It must be noted that interventionist activities for conflict and post-conflict societies in Africa, and if not universally, have always been shaped by the intermediation of UN agencies and there is relevant literature and examples to this effect. By highlighting the aspect of the unity of women in the preceding extract, note is taken, as elaborated in the next chapter that the lack thereof constitutes one of the challenges Liberian women are confronted with in their peacebuilding efforts. However, instrumental in light of the excerpt is the fact that the framework by OGA to support women in the constitutional review process, builds from the UN growing recognition and organizational policies that in engaging gender issues, women

should also and always be at the centre of any comprehensive peacebuilding and development agendas. Striving towards the fulfilment of its multidimensional peacebuilding mission in Liberia, UI-7 averred that their support for women's political participation is also exercised in the area of electoral processes. This involves engaging the political participation services of the Women Constitutional Taskforce and coordinating with the UN Women and UNDP - who provides most of the funding resources for elections, to ensure that resources likewise target and support advocacy for women's participation.

The strengthening and empowerment of women to be more involved in peacebuilding basically entails the use of different approaches to realize the different activities emplaced. For example, looking at the arena of justice support for women's peacebuilding efforts; capacity building programmes for stakeholders and actors involved in addressing issues of SGBV through training, workshops, and conferences, constitutes one of such approaches (UI-7 July 2015). Tackling SGBV is an important strategic reason for women's organizing in Liberia, and efforts to effectively address this problematic necessitates for engagements with the Rule of Law Sections, including the judges, magistrates, and police. In keeping with this need, the study established that UNMIL-OGA together with the government of Liberia have developed a Plan of Action on SGBV; is working with women's organizations to raise awareness to this effects through its offices at the local county levels; and building the capacity of the Rule of Law institutions to investigate, handle prosecutions and adjudicate SGBV offenses and provide survivors with redress (UI-7 July 2015). From the participants narratives in FGDs, the study in confirmation with UI-7's feedbacks, observed that UNMIL-OGA in its framework provides coordinated and regionalized services that turn to promote women's agency and efforts towards the goal of peace in Liberia. In line with this, UI-13 for instance maintained:

We have been part and parcel of UNSCR 1325 and 1820 national workshops and conferences for the comprehensive implementation of National Action Plans on 1325. In decentralizing the national plan, most of our women's organizations at the grassroots and local levels are tasked with and take up initiatives to collaborate with the UNMIL through its local offices and the Gbarnga Regional Justice and Security Hub to create awareness and mobilize communities and groups to address the security challenges of SGBV, especially against women and girls through training and education activities, faith plays, and dialogues.

Encapsulating from general discussions with research participants, it was identified that empowering and promoting the involvement and participation of women's role in peacebuilding, leadership, and decision-making is instrumental for the democratic consolidation of peace in post-conflict Liberia. Consequently, the complementarity of the government, local, and international organizations roles with women's efforts, sustained by policies and platforms to work in partnership with each other was pinpointed to be a key to making and attaining progress in the implementation of post-conflict processes. From a theoretical point of view, indicators of the reviewed stakeholders' efforts illustrate, firstly, the impetus of the state/government to build a base of support for women. This is a purpose which Molyneux's organizational theory speaks of its importance in light of women gaining greater representation within the state. Likewise, it adds to the literature on the relationship between the state and women's organization, and the state's recognition and espousal of women's equality and emancipation through participatory and collaborative peacebuilding from the bottom-up. Secondly, it draws attention to the integrated nature of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development theory as addressing the issue of inclusivity through coordination of peacebuilding efforts among the government, local/international actors and women's organizations working to support the equal participation of women in decision-making and leadership. In addition it contributes to scholarship on the intersectional engagement of stakeholders' roles and the weaving of post-conflict processes as enablers of sustainable transition to peace.

On a general scale, the study also observed that in addition to the complementary substantiations, there also exist tensions among women organizations, government and external bodies supporting women's decision-making and peacebuilding efforts. The discords as further elaborated in the seventh chapter, often take the form of maybe imposition of policies on and the lack of or inadequate incorporation of women's organizations into the post-conflict development processes, which in turn impacts on their role as peacebuilders.

## **6.5. Conclusion**

Examining the role of the government, local and international institutions in supporting women's agency and participation in peacebuilding and decision-making affairs has been

useful in demonstrating the benefits of having an inclusive process in the consolidation of peace and visions of sustainable development in Liberia. The question surrounding the government's promotion of women in leadership and decision-making was presented as palpable in a number of instances of early recognition of women's agency and political participation in the affairs of the state of Liberia. So, in parallel to the government's role in building the Liberia of today, it was acknowledged that since entering post-2003 dispensation, it has been the government's strategic approach to provide women the platform for participation, engagement, and support. Not only has this borne the wider acknowledgement of the role of women in bringing about peace in Liberia, but also the realization that they are equally stakeholders in the reconstruction and development of post-conflict Liberia. This centrality of women's interests and role in Liberia's post-conflict agenda was noted in the chapter to have been dovetailed with discourses on the strategies adopted by the government to ensure the promotion and recognition of women's efforts within its frameworks of implementation. Ascertaining the government's efforts and support of women's meaningful participation and involvement in light of its national policies and strategies, a summary of the policies to that effect was presented, highlighting their various objectives. More in light of government efforts, the chapter particularly examined the politics of having a woman president in relation to the advancement of women's interests. This discourse was advanced through the lens of the concepts of descriptive and substantive representation, which revolve around theorizing and analysing the dynamics of gender equality and political representativeness. Hence, the chapter observed that considerations like representation and the advancement of women's interests and the priorities of a country's gender policies, turn out to be the recurrently central points of concern when a woman is at the rudder of government decision-making. So, in the case of President Sirleaf's office, the chapter established that there has been relative improvement of the gender environment (in terms of initiating, supporting and voting for new bills; and expressing and debating women's interests and policies for women – Celis 2008:8) with regards to both concepts.

The chapter also illuminated that strengthening women's role in peacebuilding, public leadership, and decision-making is not limited only to the government, but warrants local and international organizations to simultaneously play complementary roles. The chapter built on

this critical factor by equally examining how local (PUL) and international (UNMIL-OGA) institutions in Liberia reinforce women's peace efforts. Accentuating that these stakeholders engage approaches to peacebuilding that straddles its defined agenda for inclusive and long-term democratic consolidation of peace, the chapter arrived at the following findings:

- i. The strategies employed by the government, local, and international organizations have so far been reasonably gender-responsive to the foundational security; justice and reconciliation; socio-economic well-being; and governance and participation processes that make up the framework of post-conflict recovery.
- ii. The availability of support by these institutions to bolster women's position and their ability to tap into women's perspectives have hitherto provided women the platform for participation in peacebuilding and reconstruction activities at all levels of society, thus strengthening their voices and boosting the aspiration for sustainable peace and development in Liberia.

In the discursive context of this chapter, two of the study's research questions, including that about the impact of the gender politics of having a female president on women's empowerment and leadership position were addressed. The chapter situated its analyses and assertions within the framework of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development theory; and Moleyneux's organizational theory. It also distinguished the government, local, and international institutions' utilization of participatory planning and coordination approaches to enhance women's peacebuilding roles. However, the question of sustainability of the processes and efforts continue to impend, thus creating the gap for challenges. And regardless of the complementary effort to the role of women in consolidating post-conflict processes, the study generally obtained from participants responses that the hitches women continue to face as peacebuilders are abounding. In view of this, the next chapter examines the challenges that impede the efforts of women organizing in the consolidating and building sustainable peace in Liberia.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### CHALLENGES CONFRONTING WOMEN ORGANIZATIONS' EFFORTS IN LIBERIA'S PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE

#### 7.1. Introduction

As an important component of this study, conversations with research participants also involved questions around the challenges that women and women's organizations face as peacebuilders. Apparently, Liberia has come to embody an exemplar of women's role in peacebuilding. This, as established in the previous chapters, is attributable to their agency and participation in influencing the peaceful resolution of the Liberian conflict, their continuous efforts in the post-conflict arena, and the evidence of having elected and re-electing a woman as president of the state. Thus, as part of the universal being of people with inalienable human and civil rights and as citizens of the state of Liberia, women, have through their organizational engagements, become vital for consolidating peace by ensuring the implementation of the security; justice and reconciliation; socio-economic well-being; and governance and participation activities of the post-conflict agendas. Thus far, their efforts have been and continue to be supported by the different stakeholders, as illustrated in the previous section. Notwithstanding these endeavours, building peace remains a gradual and challenging process, particularly as state and society continue in the struggle to balance what Molyneux words 'the nature of state-society relations', in contextualizing transformation that factor-in gender-sensitive, inclusive and responsive policies, among other. What is more, the ramifications of the physical battleground experiences and devastations too often transcend to the post-conflict phase and prolong to what this study describes "fated complexities" to peacebuilding, reconstruction and development processes. This chapter assesses these complexities in relation to the systemic and structural challenges it bear on the role of women as peacebuilders.

Drawing from discussions with research participants, the study identified several issues that hinder women's efforts to include: slow implementation of policies, including the under-representation of women in leadership offices; the brunt of poverty on women and lack of



financial resources; lack of education and skilled training prospects, especially in rural areas; poor infrastructural facilities; ingrained cultural practices like female genital mutilation and early marriages; patriarchy; youth bulge and high levels of joblessness; sexual and gender-based violence; tensions due to unresolved conflict grievances and land disputes; class divide and socio-economic stagnation; disunity among women and their networks, among others. Examining these challenges as one of this study's research objectives, the chapter maintains that their occurrence is an indicator of the imbalances of power relations borne by women and existent in the implementation of post-conflict peacebuilding and development agenda in Liberia.

## **7.2. Barriers to women's peacebuilding roles in Liberia**

When examining women's agency, participation and involvement in peacebuilding and the general post-conflict recovery agenda, it is important to acknowledge that their ability to influence change and transformation in Liberia greatly builds from the power of their strength as groups or organizations working for a course. According to UI-1 and UI-3, women organizing and uniting for peace in Liberia was and remains the establishment through which they negotiate and navigate the (post-) conflict space, political and socio-economic injustices and marginalization, to influence democratic consolidation and sustainable reconstruction and development processes. From the research participants' responses and relevant literature, the narratives as captured in the previous chapters illustrate that women's organizations in Liberia employ(ed) diverse strategies to realize their peacebuilding goals and interests. Thus, it is trite to recognize that the impact and meaning of their combined efforts, nationally and locally at the grassroots, are subject to severally distinct impediments as are the processes under implementation. Besides, research and insights from field discussions suggest that unresolved security and justice, socio-economic, governance, and organizational factors limit women's involvement and participation in the reconstruction and development of post-conflict Liberia.

It is important to reiterate that the women in peacebuilding discourse have always been shaped by three contending philosophies – women as the vulnerable victims; women as combatants, instigators and inciters of conflict; and women as caregivers, peace activists and

peacebuilders. Therefore, in contemplating how peace built in (post-) conflict societies and the position of women or women organizations in the equation, the study previously established that women indeed live up to different roles during and in the aftermath of conflicts. The resolution of the Liberian conflict and the peace they experience today considerably owes to the influential role of women organizing and fighting for the course of peace Liberia. Experience and literature tell that women's inclusion, meaningful participation, and peacebuilding efforts are indispensable to attaining sustainable processes especially in the post-conflict. It also informs of women's exclusion from official negotiations aimed at resolving conflicts and marginalization in policymaking for post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development agendas (Anderlini 2007). In line with this view, UI-2, underscored that their peacebuilding roles as women/women organizations in Liberia are clouded by the realities of gender inequality and incapacitated by many different reasons.

According to UI-7, the challenges that confront women peacebuilders occur despite the perceptions that Liberia is ahead on matters of gender (given its gender policy among others) and women empowerment. These perceptions, as he further accentuated are higher than the reality on ground, which is, Liberia has ingrained cultural practices and high levels of resistance on and about several issues to do with women's place and position in society (UI-7 July 2015). Adding to this, women's organizations and the other research participants for this study described some of the overlapping challenges Liberian women/groups face in building peace, while emphasizing that the drawbacks are a reality that needs to be strategically and perceptively addressed at all levels of post-conflict engagements. The three main barriers expounded in detail, include the under-representation of women in political leadership and decision-making; sexual and gender-based violence; patriarchy and ingrained cultural practices, followed by concise a description of the other challenges.

### **7.2.1. Under-representation of women in political leadership and decision-making processes**

The universal discourse on women in leadership and decision-making is linked to a long history of practical marginalization, exclusion, underrepresentation, and the subject of gender

inequality. Where policy frameworks (like the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995; the Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace in Africa of 1999; The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa of 2003; UNSCR 1325 of 2000, UNSCR 1820, 1888 and 1889, and 1960, just to mention a few) have been established to underscore the need and importance for the recognition of women's human and civil rights and the imperative to meaningfully include them in decision-making processes, sporadic and slow implementation by governments have frequently stalled the process. This snag of slow implementation is not limited only to Africa, and is unquestionably a contributing factor to the problem of women's under-representation in the sphere of public leadership. From participants' responses to the question around the challenges confronting women, it was established that one of the barriers to women's effective participation and role in peacebuilding is their marginal representation in governments and decision-making positions that influence policies on women interests, gender equality, and gendered perspectives as a whole. According to Phillips (1995) the under-representation of any particular cluster of people (women as the case in point here) in the domain of political and public decision-making, is indicative of the challenge to democratic responsibilities and principles of political equality of all citizenries, justice, legitimacy, responsiveness, and inclusiveness.

The challenge of under-representation in Liberia is marked by the interesting fact that at the helm of political leadership and decision-making is President Johnson Sirleaf - who is noted in history as Liberia's and Africa's first ever elected female Head of State. However, the extrapolation that there exists a positive intersection between the government and or management of executive leadership positions by women and the transformation of structures that instigate gender inequalities in society, has been challenged by Steady (2006:2). This contestation was also affirmed by some of the research participants for this study. Identifying the challenges faced by Liberian women in their roles as peacebuilders, the study observed from the narratives of UI-3, UI-4, UI-5, and UI-7 that some people, especially the male populace take the election of the Head of State as a reason to cull further advocacy for women's public and political standing in Liberia. It is important to note that since the 1995 Beijing Declaration provision for 30 percent quota representation and participation of women

in decision-making and leadership positions, women in most countries are demanding for its implementation. In Liberia, not only are women pushing for the 30 percent quotas, but 50 percent to create a critical mass of women leaders and empower them to have a sufficient influence in decision-making, while same time advocating for the adoption of a gender equity bill (UI-4 July 2005). However, the challenging reality as stated by UI-7 is that:

There is generally high resistance to issues of women political participation, leadership, and decision-making. An example here is the number of times (3 times) the gender equity bill has been introduced in the Liberian parliament and neglected. This simply shows the mind-set of the system and the people on gender and especially issues women to do with women's human rights and interests, despite the international applause for Liberia status of having a female president. So if we look at the mind-set, the perception is more like, we have given you women the presidency and allowed women in leadership positions, so what more do women want?

From the brief, it is evident what Liberian women are up against. Plus, the failure of this bill to gain support has also been attributed to the fact that many serving legislators (majority of whom are men) perceive gender laws that particularly see to increase the descriptive representation of women in parliament as a menace (Adams 2017:192). This as further noted by Adams, has remained one of the many factors thwarting President Sirleaf's endeavours to build legislative patronage for her policies. While recognizing this difficulty, the inevitable question that loomed was— but how many women are ministers or head leadership positions in Liberia, to begin with? To UI-7, this is a question that resonates often during their trainings and engagements with both men and women. Although Table 6.2 in the previous chapter exemplifies that Liberian women are appointed and occupy important public offices of leadership under Madam Sirleaf's presidential terms, the realism, as stated by UI-4 remains that the number or percentage is nothing compared to that of their male counterparts. This is obvious in the context of women representation in parliament, wherein the number of women in the legislature from 2005 to 2010 and 2015 elections declined from 15.5 percent to around 10.6 percent; with only about 16 to 18 percent of women assigned to work in government ministerial positions, while the rest are men (UI-3, UI-4, and U-7 July 2015). The truth about this under-representation challenge as affirmed by both the individual and FGDs research participants, boils down to the fact that people are just not used to having women in positions of leadership. This view was further established by UI-5 as he noted that:

The majority of the people in public service are not women. Truth is our society remains male dominated, especially in professional areas and our structures of government. In some instances, women are pushed away simply because they are women. The fact is, a number of people in Liberia continue to think that women should not be at the echelon of power and leadership [a woman!!! not here...many men would say]. But such stands and alterations are also made by some women. For example, during a conversation a friend recounted - 'my mother has not come to the realization that a woman can be president' - and this is not just an isolated instance, as there are many who think same. Whether these are stereotype perceptions or not, it simply points to the reality that there is quite some resistance from the population on the subject of women's active participation, leadership, and decision-making in political and public affairs.

The under-representation and exclusion of women in leadership and key decision-making positions is not new in Liberia's politics and development environment (UI-1, U1-3 and UI-8 July 2015). While concurring with this view and alluding to the element of resistance as an issue, UI-4 also pinpointed that the domination of most government ministries or department by men, may likewise be attributed to the limited education of the women, considering the social and cultural discrimination they endure. Building on this realism and the comments from the other research participants, it was established that the problem of under-representation is: an unsuccessful tenet of President Sirleaf to obliterate the glass ceiling; and a possible constitution of rebuilding patriarchy in an already male dominated leadership space, as subsequently explicated.

From the preceding, there is no gainsaying that this is one of the most palpable hurdles to women's exercises of agency, participation and involvement in peacebuilding that violates their human rights and efforts to attain of the goal of women's equality and meaningful empowerment. Similarly, it limits women impetus by creating the sentiments that their contributions are not valuable enough, despite the role they played in ensuring the peaceful resolution of the country's conflict past. According to UI-2, UI-6, UI-9, and UI-10, the experience of under-representation and exclusion sometimes demotivates women and in some cases, causes them to backslide on their goals and purpose. Against these sweeping factors, some participants of the FGDs also asserted that the marginal representation of women is even more appalling at the level of the grassroots. This is because women are often not seriously considered as equal contributors or accorded the opportunity to be part of political decision-making processes, except when it comes to exercising their civic and human

rights to vote (UI-13, UI-14, and UI-16). On the other side of this discourse concerning the under-representation of women, UI-12, as well as most of the FGD-A and FGD-B participants, accentuated that the challenge has in turn driven them to a place of positive self-discovery. This is in the sense that they continue to realize and develop their abilities as leaders in their own right, representing and defending the interests of women and girls in their communities through their works. What is more, the ripple effects of women's under-representation (adaptation to the reality with determined resolve for proactive change) was also acknowledged by several FGD-C and FGD-D participants as earlier captured through some of their narratives in chapter five.

An important point to note in the preceding is that women's ability to adjust and move beyond their marginal representation is resonated in Molyneux's organizational theory to constitute one of the diverse forms of women's cohesion and organization for advancing their interests. In terms of driving or swaying post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development processes; the study identified that understanding how women organizations (particularly at the grassroots levels) establish themselves and stay on course their aim of furthering Liberia's post-conflict agendas (irrespective of their under-representation in political leadership and decision-making), contributes to the discourse of peacebuilding from below.

### **7.2.2. Sexual and gender-based violence**

In conflict and post-conflict societies, sexual and gender-based violence remain one of the most perpetrated crimes against women and girls. Sexual violence is an element of Gender-based violence (GBV), and GBV refers to any injurious act committed against a human being forcibly or without their consent and on the basis of their socially defined gender of male or female, and which violates their universal human rights (Government of Liberia/UN Joint Programme on Sexual and Gender Based Violence and SIDA 2011). GBV generally encompasses acts of sexual violence, rape, sexual exploitation, torture and abuse, forced prostitution, imprisonment, forced or early marriages, human trafficking, murder, domestic violence, harmful traditional and cultural practices – all depending on the varying culture, country, and regional contexts (Government of Liberia/UN Joint Programme on Sexual and Gender Based Violence and SIDA 2011). In addition to this definition, scholarship suggests

that in wartime, sexual and gender based-violence, particularly against women and girls is often used as a weapon of war, which also is an indicator of the gendered nature of war. This approach to conflict has wide-ranging consequences on both the victims and survivors, which leaves them physically, emotionally, and socially broken, terrorized, and traumatized.

As previously highlighted, Liberian women borne the disproportionate brunt of the country's fourteen years of civil war. Not only were women and girls sexually assaulted and forced to oblige as sex slaves, they were also coerced into becoming wives of rebels and their commanders, among other services. Blair, Gerring, and Karim (2016) assert that the perpetration of the illegitimate act of SGBV usually transcends the conflict period to the post-conflict and emasculates efforts and processes aimed at attaining durable peace and security. SGBV, especially rape and sexual assaults, are among the challenges eroding the peace and security of women and girls and communities and families; obfuscating the achievement of long-lasting security; and hindering the peacebuilding efforts and works of women in post-conflict Liberia (UI-4 July 2015). This was confirmed by most of the FGD participants as constituting a major hindrance to their work as women organizations at the grassroots level. Likewise, the UNMIL and UN Human Rights SGBV Report of 2016 maintained that sexual violations, especially rape and domestic violence was the second farthest offense in Liberia, reported at the proportion of 70 percent and above in 2013; 708 cases of rape in 2014; 803 early 2015 and later rising to 1055 in 2015; and 579 cases of aggravated assault by May 2016 (UNMIL and UN Human Rights 2016:7).

During the FGDs, sexual violence and exploitation, early marriage and domestic violence were listed as some of the recurrent acts of SGBV that hamper the work women championing and undertaking peacebuilding roles and activities in their communities. Violence against women constitutes one of the chronic challenges we face, especially as grassroots women trying to add our voices and contribute to the peace and development of our country, UI-12 stated. In concurrence, UI-15 articulated:

Violence against us as humans of the opposite gender remain a big issue in our community and a real hindrance to the work we are trying to accomplish as women. What you would not believe is that fact that most of these violent acts of abuse against our women and girls are committed either by their spouses or boyfriends. Often times



these violence take the form of rape or sexual assault (of which many people do not still would not agree or accept that rape can happen between partners) and beatings.

This view was also expressed by most of the other FDGs participants. Still speaking to this challenge, UI-14 and UI-16 also expounded:

The insecurity we face as women and girls is disheartening. After the wars ended, we hoped for a better and stable Liberia. We were happy the brutality of war against us would be addressed once the war ended. But no, our women and girls continue to experience all forms of abuse and violations you can think of by the communities and families. Some women have even become used to the abuses. That particularly makes our work difficult, because what is the essence of counselling victims who will return back to same environment of abuse time and again; or advocating against such violations, meanwhile it continuous to happen?

While participants of the FDGs as well as UI-10, UI-11, UI-12, UI-13, and UI-15 shared the above sentiments and explained how challenging it is to their works, they also stressed that it is their duty to relentlessly strive towards ensuring the peace and safety of women and girls, and the community at large. However, the fact that the occurrence of these violations are outright disregard and disrespect for human rights cannot be overlooked. Noteworthy at this point is also the detail that one of the issues deliberated and suggested for consideration during the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreements that ended the Liberian conflict, was accountability for sex offenses and its inclusion in the truth and reconciliation commission. While the TRC report of 2009 did indeed allocate a segment of the accounts to women and conflict and proffered recommendations for prevention and redress of the prevalence of SGBV crimes (McCarthy 2011), both primary and secondary data allude that SGBV remains a major problem in Liberia.

Consistent with the above, UI-7 and UI-9 called attention to the fact that not all the cases of SGBV are reported, registered, and processed to the courts. In the event of these steps being adhered to, the hearing and trial of the cases are somewhat obscured and slow, as is the handful of perpetrators convicted or sentenced. As such, not only does scholarship confirms this fact, but it also attributes the prevalence and decelerated attention and judgements to SGBV cases to prevailing socio-cultural beliefs; the lack of willpower and conscientiousness on the part of the government envois; weak judicial institutions; logistical challenges; and

corruption (Government of Liberia/UN Joint Programme on Sexual and Gender Based Violence and SIDA 2011); patriarchy/stereotypes, among other factors. Against the context of this hurdle, the study generally observed from participants' responses and literature that the committing of SGBV acts against women and girls, significantly inhibits and limits the meaningful efforts and role of women in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture. An important point to note in light of the consequences of this challenge is the narratives that the perpetration of SGBV persists, irrespective of the establishment of the rape law that criminalizes the act.

### **7.2.3. Patriarchy and ingrained cultural practices**

Patriarchy, stereotypes, and certain entrenched cultural practices have been recognized as some of the elements at the roots of gender inequality that negatively influence the role of women in peacebuilding. Personal and popular command tell that patriarchy comes from the word patriarch, and the alternative words for the latter are father, head, paternal ruler of a family, headman or head of the family. From ancient Greek and the Old Testament knowledge, this position of ruler or head of the family was/is held by or governed by the father or the elder male of the family (Wilson 2000; Napikoski and Lewis 2017). Consistent with this, is the point that patriarchy has been variously defined, commonly as an inequitable social system that imposes gender roles and is oppressive to both men and women. Patriarchy is linked to both historical and sociological significances and features the element of power control, which is often associated and construed as the generic 'male-domination or exercise of power' especially over women, but also in their individual, organized, and community relationships in society. According to Becker (1999:21), patriarchy emanates from social structures, wherein the people or groups within these edifices construct and streamline inequalities by exercising power, domination, authority, and control. It has also been defined as "the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male domination over women in society" (French 1985:239), more so in the political, economic, and social institutional arenas. Not only does this affair of male supremacy limit and if not exclude women from the positions and institutions they dominate, it also creates inequalities that challenge the growth and sustainable development of a people and societies. From radical feminists' standpoint,

patriarchy is a sexual system of power that propagates sex-gender oppression (Wilson 2000:1493-1494). However, Becker (1999:24-25) asserts that even as patriarchal culture really values domination and the marginalization of women ultimately stands out as a notable element, it ironically is not the pillar of patriarchy. Moreover, women as Becker further contends, are not totally powerless or disadvantaged and also contribute to the oppression of their fellow women in same social system of patriarchal structures. This is an almost universal truth that is apparent in the marginal representation of women in political leadership and radical decision-making; and Liberia is no exception, despite the role women continue to play in consolidating democracy and peacebuilding.

In line with the foregoing, the study noted that the concept of patriarchy is reinforced by stereotypes as well as traditional and cultural practices, and are manifest in the socio-cultural, economic and political domains. Exploring the barrier of *patriarchy in the orbits of socio-culturalism*, the UNMIL and UN Human Rights (2016:15) report consistent with the views of UI-7 (July 2015) accentuated that:

“The reporting of cases of rape has most often been profoundly influenced by negative patriarchal and conventional beliefs which strengthen stereotypes about women and men’s attitudes. A 2008 study conducted by the UNMIL Legal and Judicial System Support Division established that 83 percent of respondents believed that women who were raped had some responsibility and blame in the crime that they were exposed to, for example because of their clothing or social comportment... To these were also (less than 50 percent but not below 30 percent) articulations that rape and sexual abuse was/is a normality in a relationship between a man and a women; rape cannot be committed in marriages or intimate relations; and sexual violation of women and girls constitute(d) an ordinary expression of a man’s sexual needs and desires...”

One of the many goals of the women’s organizations interviewed for this study is to fight against SGBV. However, during the discussions with FGD-A and FGD-B, it was severally narrated by the participants that the stereotypes that surround the issues of rape and sexual abuse greatly impedes on their objective to fight against such crimes. According to UI-10, these stereotypes are a form of the patriarchal culture that continue to infiltrate communities, thereby making what normally is a crime and violation of human rights a ‘constrained’ normalcy. Reiterating from their organizational experience of working with young girls, especially those who have been victims of one or more forms of SGBV, UI-12 recounted:

Some of the girls we have worked with by offering them training in tailoring and even babysitting services for their children, abandoned the training to return to the same abusive relationships they absconded from in the first place. Some would leave their children at our centre for long hours and we will get reports of them being seen socialising in other places instead of attending school or working on a job as initially agreed. This often happens because of their insecurities, the need for survival, and the stereotypes (of under no circumstances should a decent women abound her marriage or relationship) that are deep-rooted in our communities and society and even strengthened by some cultural beliefs.

Speaking of cultural beliefs, female genital mutilation (FGM) was also highlighted as one of the many barriers that clash with women's peacebuilding. FGM as a challenge to women's peacebuilding role did not feature in the FGDs. According to the World Health Organization (2012:1), FGM constitutes of "all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons." UI-4 and UI-7 identified this practice as a challenge to women's practical and strategic peacebuilding objective of creating an equal society for both men and women. In accord with the World Health Organization, they further asserted that the traditional/cultural practice of FGM represents an entrenched form of inequality between sexes and acute discrimination against girls and women. It is a custom that violates the girls/women human rights to: physical and emotional healthiness, bodily integrity, security, and freedom from torture; and subjects them to damaging/inhuman treatment that threatens and/or even terminates their rights to life, especially in situations where death occurs in the process. Recognizing FGM as a challenge and drawing from the responses of UI-4 and UI-7, the study established that the practice is in contravention of Article 11 of the Liberian Constitution, which guarantees the fundamental rights of all persons in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. According to UI-4, while the Constitutional provision is clear, the reality remains that:

FGM is a sensitive issue that many would not like to talk about because of cultural reasons. However, the truth is that FGM portrays the control of the bodies of women and the domination of the female gender by fellow women. This is because women are the ones who carry out the procedure and pass sentences in the events girls resisting or refusing to succumb to the cultural practice. This practice continues despite the passing of the Children's Law of Liberia in 2011, which criminalizes all forms of violence against children of which and FGM is one of such forms of violence.

From the extract, it is patent that women, as maintained by Becker (1999), also contribute to the oppression of their fellow women in the social systems that buoy up patriarchy. Discernibly, FGM as a challenge to women's human rights and peace role can also be an element of tension between them and external actors supporting their peacebuilding efforts, especially in the context of traditional women's groups and communities. This is in the sense that external attempts towards practicing women groups like the Sande Society and communities to curb such customs is often considered and imposition of foreign policies that aim to destroy and undermine internalized customs and traditional practices, thus the discord with external bodies and their global standards, as well as the government of Liberia for trying to ban this local culture (Gizelis and Joseph 2016:549). More so, the authors observe that this tradition is at times a cause of dissonance between some organizations that contend the practice and those that support or practice it.

In addition, the issue of patriarchy cum stereotypes in family and social institutions overlap with other challenges linked to policies and inequalities concerns. For example the *clash of statutory age of marriage and customary age* in Liberia, which are eighteen (18) and sixteen (16) respectively. The study established that this disparity in the two age validity of marriage is a challenge in meeting the strategic goals of women's equality and empowerment, since:

- i. In drafting policies, the laws may contradict the other in that the marriage law is 16years (a girl can get married at this age – noting that not all the girls or women embrace this custom, thus some are obliged or forced) and rape law is 18 years (however, non-consensual sexual engagement with someone at this age is rape) (UI-7 July 2015).
- ii. Under the customary law, the man can get married to as many wives as sees fit. The down element of the marriage laws is that there is as yet no legal statue on common law marriage, but there is for the customary anyways. The consequence of this is that there are situations where women stay with men for many years, and when separation occurs, the woman is left with nothing and to fend for herself and children, since the man takes all the property. This deprives both the women and the

children of rights of what the parents have built over the years, thus creating and additional burden on the women (UI-4 July 2015).

- iii. The level of discrimination that exists between urban and local children in the practice of the marriage law is a matter of concern. This is in the sense that in rural areas, parents marry off their children to older men at a very young age, thus depriving them of their education. Not only does this affects their rights to choice, but also their health (as they become baby production machines), social and economic wellbeing and fabric of life (UI-4 July 2015).

In view of the above, what study ascertained as a valid point of contention from participants was that the value and right to equality is at the nucleus of the Constitution of Liberia. However, its recognition of the customary law constitutes a systemic injustice against women on the grounds of gender that disempower women. One of these forms of disempowerment is exemplary in instances where a family with limited resources prefer educating/sponsoring the male child over the female (UI-4 and UI-9 July 2015). This builds from the popular conviction that the boy child has more responsibilities and the girl child will be carried into another family/household through marriage. This practice disempowers the girl/female child in the sense that they end up with very limited opportunities and are marginalized economically and socially (UI-9 July 2015). Implicitly, educating the female child is in away wastage of resources, given that tradition and customs already have a pre-defined role of a housewife for her. More worrying is the fact that many families still practice this culture, despite the enforcement of the girl's education policy. A consequence of this practice is that it challenges the strategic peacebuilding objective of women/women's organization to promote the education of the girl children, especially at the grassroots levels. Additionally, UI-5 averred that:

Despite the work women are doing, most people continue to look upon women as lesser humans or in a sexist manner, probably because of cultural and traditional reasons. Besides this, not many women are educated and even in cases where they are, they remain discriminated against because the social system of patriarchy permits and the level of inequality is a call for concern. For instance, a male who has not completed high school can easily be a town chief or a rural consultant, but same the situation is otherwise

difficult for a woman even if she possesses the basic/high school education qualification. So, women are disadvantaged even though they may be of better standing than the men.

The social system of patriarchy is prevalent across Liberia and power relations therein are propped by inequalities that promote the male supremacist ideology and oppress the human rights of women, regardless of their immeasurable contribution to the growth and development of society. Also emerging in this discourse, was the issue of *patriarchy in the political and economic domains* of society. Aside from the poor representation of women in political leadership and decision-making, other narratives allied the limitation of policy formulation and implementation to disaggregate women's specific gender needs to shrewd patriarchal institutional systems and universal predilection to use gender friendly language that combine or generalize women's needs.

In Liberia, there exists institutions that compile general policies without necessarily ensuring that the gender component is mainstreamed (UI-4 and UI-7 July 2015). According to UI-4, not mainstreaming gender in policy processes is an issue that underlays the exclusion and marginalization of women. This is in the sense that it defeats the government and Liberia's normative post-conflict recovery objective of promoting active policies and agendas that empower and gender-mainstream women in decision-making and operational peacebuilding, reconstruction and development processes. Drawing from an empirical example, UI-4 narrated

In keeping with our security sector reform processes, we just did a validation workshop for the Liberian National Police (LNP) and the Bureau of Immigration. Though the language was gender friendly in that it included the 'he/she' and omitted the essence of gender mainstreaming, which for us entails recruitment, retention, parity, etc. These were not clearly mentioned or specified in the document explicating how the reform of the LNP would be implemented. Let's say recruitment is a strategy for ensuring this transformation, then at least the document should mention what percentage would be recruited and if women are recruited, then the document should specify what mechanisms are there or should be put in place to guarantee they are retained in the security service.

For example, women may have the skills and passion to serve in the security sector, but also they have their gender roles and responsibilities. Say a woman in the force is still having children and breastfeeding, is it right to put her in the night duty? If she have



children as young as two, three, five or six months/years of age, how does she cope with her domestic role and professional life? If she is sent to a bordering town, where there are no facilities or services to properly accommodate her and her children (as often is the case), is she expected to continue in the service? So when we talk about challenges women face, we also talk about equality and equity and the inconsideration or attempts at homogenization of women's needs that prevail in the formulation of policies, in spite of the many policy instruments and resolutions pushing for women's recognition and equality.

Puechguirbal (2010) in her "... A Textual Analysis of UN Documents" also asserts that the language of the UN which delimits women in essentialist roles, blurrily define and generalize their roles and different needs, is an enabler for decision-makers (mostly men) to afford women subordinate positions that undercuts women's agency. Moreover, failing to mainstream women's specific needs/interests further creates the tendency to overlooks their individuality and homogenizes the challenges they encounter into a one solution fit all cubicle that often does not work (UI-3 and UI-8 July 2015). Meanwhile, Molyneux (1985:232) postulates that "a theory of interests that has an application to the debate about women's capacity to struggle for and benefit from social change must first begin by recognizing difference rather than by assuming homogeneity".

In all, patriarchy as a challenge to women's peacebuilding role cannot be discussed without delving into how it plays out in the economic sphere. Economically, agriculture remains the backbone of Liberia's economy and women are the majority contributors in this sector (Namubiru-Mwaura 2012). However, the irregularities in the laws and customs governing women's land rights in Liberia continue to be a disadvantage to them and is commonly rooted patriarchy. This view resonated during all the FGDs as one of the challenges that confront women. Interestingly, women and men alike have rights to land under the customary and statutory governance systems. Though allowed access and rights to land and property, the elements of use and ownership vary depending on tribal origins, lineage/heredity systems, as well as the legal/customary norms governing marriage and other family relationships (Namubiru-Mwaura, Knox and Hughes 2012). In light of these determining factors, women's access to land and property rights are often not protected or secured as those of men. For example, UI-13 as well as two participants in FGD-C specified:

Most of us women in rural Liberia are the breadwinners of our families and agriculture is one of the main means through which we sustain ourselves and households. However, we do not have ownership rights to most of the farm lands that we cultivate and this makes it difficult to manage the farms as we would will, because of the limited rights. More so, our insufficient and non-guaranteed access to land is a contributing factor to the impoverishment many women headed households experience, especially as grassroots and rural pollution, stated UI-14 and a participant in FGD-C (July 2015).

Listening to the participants' narratives, the study established that the reality of women's lack of and insecure access to land rights is structural economic exclusion and domination that not only aims at disempowering them economically, but also contributes to poverty. Further discussing patriarchy in the economic domain, UI-4 and UI-12 asserted that most Liberian women are either active in the informal economy or self-employed. A large segment of these women are often underpaid in the informal employments as compared to their male counterparts, and also lack access to capital necessary for supporting and sustaining their trades or small businesses. Not only does this constrain women to be economically dependent on men, but it poses a huge challenge to the goal of women's economic emancipation and empowerment (UI-8 and UI-11 July 2015). According to UI-13, pushing through the informal sector neither yields enough revenue nor resolve the impoverishment and poverty that women face. Adding to this, UI-16 stated that *most Liberian women like herself and especially in rural and grassroots communities, are and continue to be economically disadvantaged because tradition and customs trained them for marriage, but did not provide them with the educational opportunities and skills, which they need to navigate the current economic situation and environment.* Nagbe (2010) expresses same view by stating that a good number of Liberian women in the past and even presently, are denied the opportunity and benefits of formal education and economic empowerment, something that serves as the basis for advancing equality.

From the above, there is no denying the impact that functional patriarchal structures have on the peacebuilding efforts of women in Liberia. While it was earlier stated that women's oppression may not be the focal aim of patriarchal systems, truth remains that power relations in a highly patriarchal society like Liberia continue to be manoeuvred through marginalization and treatment of women like second class citizens.

#### **7.2.4. Lack of financial resources for projects and organizational sustainability**

The lack of funding by women's organizations to conduct their activities was also highlighted as one of the challenges they face in their peacebuilding roles. According to AWID (2006), raising funds for women's rights organizations is a complex endeavour because the priorities and interests of donor and funding bodies are constantly shifting. As such, this has resulted in an increased shrinkage of financial support opportunities for the women organizations, albeit the fact that their efforts and contributions advance women's human rights and lives, gender equality, and societal development (AWID 2006). In Liberia, the experiences and roles of women's movements tell how pivotal they were and continue to be driven advocates, actors, and influencers in the transformation, peacebuilding, and development of the country. However, most of the women's organizations that steered Liberia from conflict to its current post-conflict state, now face the growing privations of functioning on meagre or overstrained budgets to effectively accomplish their distinct peacebuilding goals (UI-1 and UI-3 July 2015). Examining this challenge, the study established from participants' responses that women's organizations in Liberia that are advantaged enough to receive generous funding for their activities (including the organization of training, seminars, conferences, workshops, etc.), are mostly financed by international donor bodies or organizations (UI-2 July 2015). However, acquiring such funding often entails the rigorous process of clear and objective proposal writing; strategic planning; policies and financial reports (DAC Network on Gender Equality 2008). According to UI-4, UI-10, UI-11, and UI-12 meeting up to the requirements of these processes is a barrier that particularly limits rural/grassroots organizations as well as those under-resourced or lacking the educated and skilled human resources to do so.

The women's organizations and representatives of such, interviewed for this study stated that they are not fully funded. While indicating that it is crucial for women's organizations to begin seeking funding from their own governments and local embassies, DAC Network on Gender Equality (2008) also draws attention to the fact that issues of gender equality and women's empowerment are hardly ever the conspicuous priorities in national development strategies. Applying for funding support from the government or other internal institutions is intrinsically a challenge because of bureaucracy and lengthy administrative procedures, UI-7 and UI-9 contended. However, this is not to say the management of women's organizations

are completely void of government support, since it is offered in the form of training assistance and small grants (UI-4 July 2015).

This study found that financial aid is indispensable for the operationalizing of women's organizations and the difficulty of accessing it is hard-felt by rural/grassroots women's organizations. This is in the sense that some projects get to be suspended when funds are not available (UI-11 July 2015). Drawing from the current situation of their organizations, UI-11 and UI-12 respectively explained:

At the beginning of our cassava project, we had support, especially from some of the UN agencies. However, as you can see, our machines for processing the cassava into different other marketable food products are all bad. This has greatly slowed down the work we do as a women's groups to build our communities and empower women. Acquiring funding has become much more difficult than before.

As you can see, our sewing machines which we use for training and building the skills of women and girls and even young men in our community are all not working for so long and are outdated. We have been trying to raise funds to get new ones, but it is not easy. This is not the only area we face funding challenges. Most often, trainings, seminars, workshops on how to empower women, raise funds, write project proposals, etc. are conducted in the capital city Monrovia and because of lack of transportation, we are unable to attend most of these events.

The narratives of the participating women organizations in Bong and Nimba Counties about the funding hurdles they face, were emblematic of how challenging it gets to keep abreast and sustain an organization in the absence of financial sustainability, talk less of initiating new projects in such circumstances. In light of this challenge, the study also established from responses that it is linked to the problem of disunity among women's organizations, lack of coordination, and class divide.

#### **7.2.5. Disunity and class divide among women organizations**

It is impossible to understand the challenges women organizations are facing without situating them within the historic framework of their emergence. Organizing into a collective space with variations and differences in background and experiences, Liberian women/women's organizations emerged, rallied, and united in their agencies and pursuit of peace to end the country's fourteen years of civil war. However, in the current post-conflict

space, the nature of their organizing for peace and for a course in Liberia has gradually changed, with the purpose that united them significantly shifting to a level where disunity and incoordination existent among them seem to constitute a severe drawback to their work and progress (UI-7 July 2015). According to UI 1 and UI-3, one of the militating barriers to the success of women's organizational agencies and political leadership in Liberia today, is the disunity and disintegration amongst them as a people and as groups, as well as the lack of solidarity and the issue of class divide (UI-12 July 2015). For example, UI-4 asserted that:

Looking at the bills being pushed in parliament, the question – why is it taking so long to be endorsed – cannot be avoided. There are number of factors militating against its adoption and the issue of women's disunity on the matter cannot be overlooked. Truth is, women need to be more proactive and aggressive to push for the recognition of the rights and protection of women. But then, how many of us women are forceful and supportive of issues to do with our interests as we did to bring an end to the conflict?

In line with the above excerpt, UI-7 also mentioned that the disunity among Liberian women remains one of the main contributing factors for the under-representation of women in the legislature and governance processes. Another problem here is that there is no strategic framework on how women could unite and work together presently (UI-7 July 2015). Moreover, the study established from the discussions with FGD-A, FGD-B, UI-12, UI-13 and UI-14 that the issue of disunity is also fuelled by the disparity between the educated (the apparent upper class) and uneducated women. Thus, they narrated:

As women working at the grassroots/rural communities, we are looked down on in terms of decision making or policies, simply because we are not educated. Often, when we are called upon by the educated women to participant in any event, it means they want to use us in the programmes for their benefit, and after that we hear nothing from them. We would like to collaborate on an equal basis, but not as a charity case.

In addition to the preceding, UI-7 indicated that through the work undertaken by UNMIL-OGA and interaction with the different women organizations, the issue of educated and uneducated often feature as a challenge. This is because some women feel that they achieved what they have through hard struggle, and therefore do not understand why they should have formative action. It is however important to note that this problem lingers because there is no uniformity/informative thinking, and this is expected, given the diversity and heterogeneity of the women organizations (UI-7 July 2015). While these overlapping hurdles (disunity, class

divide, and incoordination) can be addressed through education and skill training approaches that aim at building the capacity of these women organizations, the modalities employed that are effective to give the women organizations, particularly those at the grassroots, a renewed meaning to the work they do.

#### **7.2.6. The capacity building challenge**

Capacity building is fundamental to the advancement of women's organizations and the processes they are engaged in. However, a number of barriers remain in balancing the work they do as peacebuilders and the overall capacity building challenges they face as women's organizations or encounter working with other groups or institutions. In the framework of women's organizations as non-profit entities, capacity building can be taken to mean initiatives and processes designed to advance the organizations' performance, development, and effectiveness by strengthening its leadership and management (Light and Hubbard 2004). According to the authors, the activities can likewise be aimed at serving communities or a group of people and complementing organizational or group efforts. Reading through some of the challenges faced by women in their peacebuilding and organizational roles in Liberia, the study observed that capacity building challenges vary in nature and scope and wanting in areas like: creative and resourceful training, informal learning; people to people learning activities; peer learning and resource (financial, human, and material) management; information and communication sharing; general knowledge (especially about strategies and policies on women's rights and gender equality-roles-interests); and organizational training.

Within the Liberian context, the study established that though women have actually been able to influence a number of changes in terms of gender policies, the insufficiency or lack of capacity to conduct proper analysis, document, report, and draft these policies without contradictions and generalizations remains a challenge. An example of this as earlier illustrated is the contradictory marriage law and rape law. To UI-7, this problem boils down to the lack of capacity, which cuts across gender issues and many other concerns like accountability, justice, and monitoring and evaluation, especially at the levels of government and international efforts to support women's organizational peacebuilding roles. Looking at capacity building in the framework of government engagements, UI-4, UI-2, UI-6, UI-8 and UI-9 noted that having the Ministry of Gender (MoGCSP) is a supportive strategy for the

Liberia's gender agenda and the role women are playing in consolidating post-conflict processes. However, in working with other institutions to complement women's roles, the Ministry, as contended by UI-7, UI-10 and UI-11, faces the capacity challenge at the County levels. This is in the sense that most of their County level workers are employed in the capacity of volunteers because they possess limited education and training skills. Meanwhile, the structuring of the Ministry engenders some prospects for change, wherein workers at County levels would be expected to at least be Master degree holders who can monitor and implement activities (UI-7 July 2015).

Additionally, while efforts by government, local, and international community to boost women's participation and involvement in leadership and peace processes is evident, not much attention is really given to investing in sustainable capacity building activities, as highlighted in the funding challenge. What is more, looking at Liberia's transition plan (presidential elections in focus) and the continuous post-conflict reconstruction and development processes for example, a number of capacity issues come into question. Some of these as pondered by UI-7 during the interview include:

How do we (government, organizations, Liberians) ensure accountability in gender equality, mainstreaming, and empowerment policies? How accountable is the government, and other actors including the UN in implementing some of these commitments? And how do we monitor these, considering that oftentimes, we don't have clear indicators in the agenda for gender transformation that can transmute to resources and commitment?

In a way, the above discourses and excerpt exemplifies that though strategies are indeed being established and implemented, the capacity gap of expectation outcomes of policies (given the absence of monitoring mechanisms/systems) and relational equality between institutions working in collaboration with women's organizations, are not constructively factored-in. For example, Gizelis and Joseph (2016:544-545) assert that while bottom-up policies are identified as paramount to Liberia's National Action Plan (NAP) and civil society organizations, especially women organizations are implored to observe and monitor the implementation of the NAP and the UNSCR 1325, there is lack of capacity and competence to act as monitors, particularly the grassroots organizations. Adding to this, the procedures of monitoring how the programmes are implemented, are not driven by local capacities or needs (Gizelis and



Joseph 2016:545). Consequently, this may be grounds for possible tensions between women organizations in the grassroots and the government, external agencies, internal CSOs, and leading women's organizations involved in drafting the policies, for not giving them due consideration in the processes. Put together, these capacity gaps emasculate the implementation of both the NAP and gender mainstreaming programmes, and may as well impede grassroots organizational efforts of developing their own proposals. By implication therefore, the study established that the capacities of women's organizations, especially at the grassroots, are not assessed in advance to determine their position and skills to ensure continuity of strategies and activities. Affirming to this, UI-4 recounted:

As the Ministry of Gender working with grassroots women, we focus on enhancing their capacity through creative works, one being the beads making craft. However, the major challenge has to do with the location of these organizations, which are far in the rural areas. So most of the times, they have to come to Monrovia or the capitals of the various counties to ensure that their activities are conducted. Also, financial resources to support these women groups are not available because not all of them have the opportunity of getting funding from donors, or have educated women to assist them write proposals for funding. This is quite challenging, especially for the women organizations, even though they make use of the local material at their disposal. Moreover, making the beads is time consuming and costly for the women. If these women have the necessary support, their work will be easier. Making a bead for example will take two weeks, meanwhile same bead takes like ten minutes to be made in china.

Generally, government or international institutions' initiatives to supportively build the capacities of rural women is recommendable. This for instance, may include offering training assistance and the provision of seedlings to the rural women, most of whom are agriculturalist. However, the absence of farms-to-market roads and transportation options for these rural women involved in agriculture for sales and livelihood, challenges the sustainability of such strategies (UI-15 and UI-11 July 2015).

Other capacity-linked challenges identified by this study included the problem of inter-generational running, whereby youth are not being educated and trained to be proactively involved in the post-conflict processes and works of women's organizations. The danger here is that the youth would gradually forget the history of the emergence and role of women's pursuit of peace and development in Liberia and may not learn from what women and women

groups are currently engaged in to ensure continuity (UI-1, UI-3 and UI-7, July 2015). Resulting from the discussion with UI-5, it was underlined that the apparent youth bulge; increased levels of joblessness and unemployment; and the fact that approximately 75000 young male motor bikers who are trying to be self-employed, yet are restricted by the government from areas where business is most profitable; do not only constitute a challenge to ongoing post-conflict peace efforts, but a potential conflict stimulator in Liberia. Besides, the conflict history of Liberia and its consequences constitute an experience that majority Liberians do not want to relive. Therefore, any form of conflict outbreak would unquestionably exhume traumas and defeat the purpose of peace which Liberian women have determinedly work(ed) to build (UI-5 July 2015). In addition to these, references were also made to land disputes, poverty, and economic problems that interlace and overlap with most of the preceding challenges.

Making a conclusive note about the above challenges facing women in their peacebuilding efforts, the study opined that there is a great deal at stake for women organizations in Liberia, especially if the problems persist. Synopsizing from some of Molyneux's writings, the study also observed that the challenges to women's roles in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture can also be linked to the increased opposition to rights agendas and the gradual decline of practical politicking in support of women's rights, despite the numerous local, regional and international frameworks emplaced advancing and advocating for the need and importance of women's rights, recognition, and participation in leadership, decision-making and development processes. In the context of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development agenda, the fore-discussed barriers somewhat challenge the effective implementation of the transition to peace processes and brings to question the element of gender integration into peacebuilding, seeing as women's interests are not well represented. That these challenges abound, is not to say great progress, as discussed in chapters five and six, has not been attained in the implementation of post-conflict processes in Liberia. However, for more progress to be achieved, there is need for a way forward, that is, recommendations and strategies for addressing the challenges.

### 7.3. Conclusion

As established in this chapter and as it is with most societies transitioning from conflict, implementing post-conflict processes and undertaking development measures that are effective and sustainable dictate that challenges are bound to occur. Given women's active involvement in the advancement of Liberia, this chapter identified some of the many factors that impede the realization of their full potentials as peacebuilders. It is worthy to note that their roles are equally a sine qua non requirement for effective democratic consolidation of its post-conflict processes. Contextualizing the challenges that Liberian women face in their roles as peacebuilders, the chapter featured several challenges<sup>57</sup> and concluded with the imminent inquiry about how they can be addressed. Therefore, in making conclusions for this study in the chapter that follows, some recommendations are drawn from the participants' responses and presented in a manner that reflect the broader context of Liberia and the current discourses on how the substantive participation and role of women in peacebuilding can be continually advanced.

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<sup>57</sup> Including the marginal representation of women in political leadership and decision-making processes; sexual and gender-based violence; patriarchy and ingrained cultural practices; disunity and class divide among women organizations; and capacity building challenge.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **8.1. Introduction**

This study was an exploration of the role of women in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture and involved engaging both women organizations and individuals during the field data collection process in Liberia. Generally, the study sought to contribute to literature through attempts to increase understanding of the relevance of individual women and women organizational agencies and roles in the framework of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development processes. This chapter brings together the concluding summary of chapters one to four of this study, summary of research findings presented in chapters five to seven, recommendations for the preceding chapter seven on the challenges that confront women in their roles as peacebuilders, contributions of the study and suggestions for further research.

This study ensued from the understanding that the role of women in peacebuilding is arguably an area of research, which for a long time remained undeveloped and unexplored in conflict and peace studies. But with the emerging trends and new directions in the practice of peace operations, the particular focus and analysis of conflict and peace interventions evolved to embroil new perspectives that seek to identify, incorporate, and understand the role and contribution of women to the narratives and outcomes of peacebuilding agendas. As specified by the study, a prominent development following this shift to peacebuilding was the role of women therein, which has now become an ascendant discourse in both conflict and post-conflict analyses. As such, the study noted that the growing attentiveness to the women-peacebuilding debate is surrounded by ideological 'inquiries concerning their link, especially in influencing policy outcomes. To this, the study indicated that the scholarly community has been overwhelmed with literature that either attempts to respond, explain, analyse, and rationalize the apparent role of women in peacebuilding, or their exclusion thereof.

To provide context-specific understanding and analyses of the women-peacebuilding discourse in the framework of post-conflict processes, the study adopted the Liberian

experience as a macrocosm that embodies the role of women in post-conflict transition. The study researched the Liberian case study, building on the research question – how instrumental have women and women organizations been in empowering peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction and development processes (security sector reform, justice and reconciliation, socio-economic welfare, and governance and political participation) in Liberia? – and the objective to probe into the instrumentality of women’s organizations’ in empowering the end of peace in Liberia, and how their contributions continue to drive the consolidation and steady implementation of the country’s post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development agenda. The study’s research questions and objectives developed from and were premised on the research argument that the practical inclusion, representation, and participation of women at all levels of (post-) conflict revitalization processes is imperative for the attainment of peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development objectives. To further develop and critically analyse this view, chapter one focused on locating and providing context to the women-peacebuilding discourse.

The second chapter of the study reviewed relevant literature on women in peacebuilding and international policy perspectives. The chapter noted that there is ample literature on the women and peacebuilding discourse, as well as international, regional, and national policies that advocate for the rights of women to equality in decision-making processes. The literature review highlighted that a blurred point of contention in the women and peacebuilding analysis that creates a dearth in understanding women’s organizing for peace, is the tendency of institutions and society to over generalize their organizational roles. As stated in the chapter, this usually occurs irrespective of their operationalizing as individual entities with diverse strategic goals, and may emasculate their significance and contributions to post-conflict processes. Furthermore, the review of literature unearthed that the challenges between the implementation of policies on women’s rights (ascription of generic policies and gender equality agendas amongst women in international treaties and platforms on their roles as peacebuilders) constitute a paucity in literature that is yet to be addressed. Thus, it noted that this broad view has resulted in the conviction that the recognition and inclusion of women in public decision-making structures is tantamount to the representation and improvement of women’s conditions at all levels of the society.

To address the dearth identified in literature, the study espoused the framework of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development; Molyneux's organizational theory; and the rights-based approach to peacebuilding, as discussed in the chapter three. Examining the relationship between the theories, the chapter established the stature and significance of women's peacebuilding roles in society. It anchored the appraisal on the thematic inquiry on how peace is built in post-conflict societies and then undertook to underline the theoretical importance of the pillars that make up post-conflict processes as interchangeably linked and vital to the realization of peace. Also, the theoretical chapter attempted to locate the role of women in the post-conflict recovery agendas by postulating the agencies of women's organizations and women's gender interests as propounded by Molyneux to be the driving force for their involvement, representation, and inclusivity in the processes.

In addition, the theoretical frameworks chosen for this study directed the research methodology and methods employed and presented in chapter four. The chapter described the research approach and methods used for data collection, the research sample technique and population, sources and research process, types and methods of data analysis, ethical considerations and research limitations, and the challenges encountered in the course of realizing this study. It revealed that selected women organizations that were active in building peace during and in the aftermath of the Liberian civil wars and key government, local, and international stakeholders in Liberian post-conflict processes, were purposefully sampled as the group of interest for this study. As a result, the research population for the study constituted of sixteen individual participants for the semi-structured interviews and four focus group discussions, consisting of a total of forty five participants, of which six were also part of the sixteen who participated in the individual interviews. This is to say the study engaged a total number of fifty five participants.

## **8.2. Summary of the research findings**

The point of departure here is that the study aimed to contribute knowledge and insight to discourses on the interconnectedness between women and (post-) conflict peacebuilding architectures in Africa. In presenting a comprehensive and analytical examination of women's role in peacebuilding, the study particularly focused on the contributions and

engagements of women and women's organizations in Liberia in order to better ground the discourse. In an assortment of ways, the Liberian experience was used in this study as an exemplar that embodies the situation of women in post-conflict transitions, as they were quite influential in transforming the Liberian conflict landscape towards peace and the current leadership environment the country celebrates today. While this earned the acknowledgement of their profound roles as peacebuilders, it also offered the platform for a critical assessment of where they are at present in their continually evolving roles in Liberia's peacebuilding, reconstruction and development processes. Therefore, in appraising the women and peacebuilding nexus, the study advanced from a generic perspective, calling attention to the fact that as long as the history of post-colonial Africa catalogues, the African continent has been the hub of most of the world's conflicts. Often, the conventional practice in such climates of conflict is the disciplining of the conflict society into peace through negotiations and engagements in peace processes.

Of some relevance, was the assertion that from the year 2000 (when the UNSCR 1325 was adopted) to present, deliberations and strategies for implementing the agendas for peace have been met with emergent consensus on the need to make them more inclusive, by ensuring women's equal participation, especially after the wars have ended. That the subject of women emerged, is to say that women initially were excluded or not represented in the processes, thus an issue to refuse no more. In view thereof, the study advanced assertions that the thesis of women and peacebuilding is an area of research, which prior to the 21<sup>st</sup> century remained undeveloped and unexplored in the field of conflict and peace analyses and in the practice of peace operations. Consequent to this realization, the study underscored that strategizing for the revitalization of peace in the post-conflict has been increasingly met with agendas and treatises that centre on making the processes more inclusive of women. As such, this engendered significant scholarship on the rapport between women and peacebuilding, of which central to the considerations were three key points identified and alluded to in the development of this dissertation. These perspectives speak to the fact that:

- i. In conflict, women take up active roles as actors, combatants, caregivers, and peace activists. But because of the gendered nature of contemporary conflicts and the sexist



nature of society, they remain disproportionately victimized and marginalized (McKay 2004);

- ii. Women through their idiosyncratic and sometimes reciprocated experiences of conflict provide a gendered specific and transformative perspective to peace-building both at the structural and practical levels (Alaga 2010: 2);
- iii. The eventual attainment of sustainable peace is feasibly and conceivably dependent on the active inclusion of the women that make up half of the societies. Therefore, both men and women must be partakers in agendas of post-conflict developments (Ernest 1997: 7; Schirch 2004: 5).

The study further established that the tenets of international, regional and national policy instruments expansive on issues of gender equality, especially on issues around the recognition of women's rights in conflict and peace times have been quite edifying on the women and peacebuilding dialogue. A few of these policies include: the Beijing Declaration of 1995; United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 of 2000 on Women, Peace and Security; and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa of 2003. In this acknowledgement, the study distinguished that these instruments have widened the space for women's public participation and increased coupling into the decision making and peace processes. Furthermore, the study revealed that women organizing under the auspices of civil society groupings and non-governmental organizations have been successful in unfurling the scenes to pursue and engender meaningful responses and approaches to enhance their positions in peace processes. Through widespread advocacy and activism, women have continued to unlock their potentials as agents and architects of peace and security, and of socio-economic and political development. This progression of women's agency and role as articulated in the study, is due in part to the gradual yet supportive engagement of their governments, as well as international, regional and local institutions and organizations. Thus the study ascertained that this development communicates the imperative urgency of women's indispensability to the success, if not, the sustainability of the course of peacebuilding agendas.

Furthermore, it was revealed that despite developments in relation to women's rights and imperative for inclusion in decision-making processes, the rhetorical and qualifying why, what, and how interrogatives over their roles and assertions for equal representation and recognition continue to be asked. Why the particular focus on the role of women in peacebuilding? What does peacebuilding mean for women? What are the different approaches that underlie the role of women in peacebuilding? How important are their contributions to peacebuilding efforts? The study asserted that the relevance of these inquiries build from a history where women, though playing active roles in society, often remained marginalized from public decision-making processes prior to and in this present consciousness. Capitalizing on this understanding, the study established that for women to be internationally advocated for, promoted, and recognized as cardinal role players in the realization and sustainability of same processes for which they were initially excluded, is an outright transposition in the development of human and gender relations.

Through this review of literature and research findings the study established that there are sparse narratives on the woman and peacebuilding subject that have examined and addressed:

- i. Women's evolving role in peacebuilding and decision-making from past to present, and comprehensively examine their role as it relates to each of the four pillars of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development agenda;
- ii. The diversity of women's roles as informed by their strategic interests traversing their distinctive networks of organizations in Liberia, and how this diversity influences the different peacebuilding objectives and outcomes; and
- iii. How Liberian women can re-establish a rallying point and again unit for a purpose to rise above the institutional and human challenges they are confronted with in their peacebuilding roles.

Considering these amongst the research hypotheses, questions and objectives, the study found from the analyses of data collected and analysed in chapters five to seven that:

- i. Women have numerous strategies for responding to war and conflict situations, and documented individual abilities to activate and advance peace efforts. Forced to a

corner, women's substance and power to be change makers continued to surface in the conflict scenery in Liberia.

- ii. The key for women organizing to influence (post-) conflict processes, are ingrained in their practical and especially strategic interests that inform their individual and organizational agencies. As for what constituted women's organizations and interests in the framework of the organizational theory, the finding resolved on three issues:
  - a. Firstly, that if post-conflict processes are to be effective and transform institutions and societies as it ought to, then the angle of women's interests and needs cannot be overlooked in the equation.
  - b. Secondly, engaging post-conflict peace and reconstruction processes is not all about how they are operatively adopted and implemented, but most importantly how inclusive and sustainable they are in the long-term.
  - c. Thirdly, ensuring that the processes are sustainable, hinge on the active involvement of the civil society, and the degree to which women, and women's interests are practically recognized and integrated at all levels of the processes.
- iii. Liberian women were instrumental in paving the road to peace. Notable in this success story of peace, is the will and determination of women to be free from conflict for the greater good of peace and security for all Liberians.
- iv. Women's roles have moved beyond the traditional limit of reproduction and caretakers of the homes to that of public influencers, peacebuilders and decision makers, as evident in their struggle for peace activism, mobilization and massive turn out at voting stations to be that voice of peace and transformation they need and want for Liberia.
- v. Peacebuilding, reconstruction and development processes necessitate the full and equal involvement of women in all phases and at all levels as an imperative to the processes' sustainability. And, the dynamism women bring to the processes as equal

bearers of human and civil rights and as women's organizational groupings in their own rights, propels for operative and meaningful realization of the processes.

- vi. Women and women's organizational role and contributions to peacebuilding processes are widespread and intertwined to their distinct strategic interests and operational strategies. Their leading role in peacebuilding, which is to contribute to the sustainable realization of peace before, during, and the event of post-conflict reconstruction and development at all levels of the society, is an everyday developing reality in the case of Liberia.
- vii. Women's involvement in peacebuilding continue to be informed by the need to realize their practical interests, that is, socially accepted basic needs, such as safe water and food, housing, health care and sanitation, education, remunerations, and employment (Molyneux 1985; UNESCO 2003). Of these, some may in effect be strategic interests depending on the setting and how individuals and groups define their interests, in that while housing and education for example, maybe be basic interests for one group, it is strategic for another. Generally, these interests fall under the banner of social and economic wellbeing in the context of post-conflict, and are indispensable for daily human survival and peace itself.
- viii. Women's role also builds on their strategic interests. This includes the need for equal opportunities and representation in development and decision-making processes (Reeves and Baden 2000); the need for transformation in the domains of power sharing and gender division of labour that allows women equal political rights and social liberty, equal access, control and ownership of resources or credits (Molyneux 1985). The Liberian example includes the coordination of women's organizations vying for 30% (now 50%) equal quota representation of both women and men in public decision-making processes.
- ix. The mandate for civil society inclusion (women's organizations in this case) to be part and parcel of overseeing and implementing post-conflict recovery processes in order to consolidate peace and development that is long-term, speaks to the adoption

of the rights-based approach and the acknowledgement that women's rights, voices, and perspectives matter.

- x. Engaging women at all phases and levels of peacebuilding and reconstruction processes (security sector reform/transformation; justice and reconciliation; socio-economic well-being; and governance and participation), gives them a sense of ownership. It also empowers especially women at the grassroots level to take charge in managing situations of conflict and post-conflict by transforming and reconciling their families and communities (Lederach 1997).
- xi. Women's peacebuilding roles in the context of post-war Liberia are internationally recognized and acknowledged. This is evident in MARWOPNET's receipt of the distinguished 2003 United Nations Prize for Human Rights (Sewell 2007); and the award of Nobel Peace Prizes to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Leymah Gbowee, for their non-violent participation and contribution to peace in 2011 (United States Institute of Peace 2012).
- xii. Though women's contributions to peacebuilding and post-conflict processes are informed by a common objective of "a Liberia that is peaceful, just, secured, developed, recognizes and respects human rights, security and equality for all", their strategies for attaining this vary from one organization to the other and intersect severally. These strategies include: advocacy campaigns, lobbying and networking, raising awareness, peaceful demonstrations, training and capacity building, attending conferences and peace talks, sex strikes, prayer and fasting, entreating rebels to cede, community outreach and engagements, participation in TRC, involvement in electoral processes, conducting peer review of presidential office, fostering education and peace club initiatives, etc.
- xiii. Women's as peacemakers in Liberia have gradually and continue to move from leveraging their status as non-combatants and as a voice somehow 'above' politics to entering the fray of electoral politics, while continuing strive in their roles as peacemakers and peacebuilders.

- xiv. The urgency and effectiveness of women's role in peacebuilding and decision-making does not exist in a vacuum or in isolation from the broader support accorded by the government of Liberia as well as international and internal local based organizations. The strategies employed by the government, local, and international organizations have so far been reasonably gender-responsive to the foundational security; justice and reconciliation; socio-economic well-being; and governance and participation processes of Liberia's post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development agenda.
- xv. Despite the impact and contribution of women in the reconstruction and development of Liberia, the challenges to their roles as peacebuilders remain quite enormous and include elements such as marginal representation of women in political leadership and decision-making processes; sexual and gender-based violence; patriarchy and ingrained cultural practices; disunity and class divide among women organizations; and capacity building challenge.
- xvi. The underrepresentation of women in decision-making simply spells that, the fact that the country is being led by a female president and women hold seats in parliament and ministerial offices, does not necessarily result in or mean better opportunities for women, substantive representation of women's interests, or addressing all the challenges that confront them. So the gender gap in Liberia is still wide.
- xvii. Women's role as peacebuilders is an everyday work in progress and there is still much to be done by the Liberian women, so their resolve is unwavering.

### **8.3. Recommendations to women's peacebuilding challenges**

Noticeably, the challenges that confront women organizations in their peacebuilding efforts are multifaceted, varying in the terms of political, economic, socio-cultural, and organizational factors. Addressing these challenges would require strategies specific to the Liberian context. While there is no one solution fit all for these challenges, there are however

some shared global measures that are essential for addressing them and advancing sustainable processes.

Looking at the challenge of under-representation, it is recommended that the few women who seat in offices and positions of power need to strengthen women's leadership roles by being exemplary in offering meaningful support and substantively representing women by way of 'doing and not just saying'. In this manner, it is likely that they may also change the mind-sets of the men who are very conservative. However, achieving this would require a lot of capacity building and affirmative action to be setup in order to secure more women seats just for women in the legislature. Also, there is need for the Liberian Constitution to provide a forum that authorizes and empowers the Legislature to ratify protocols that increase the citizenries' access to political and economic participation and advance the realization of social justice as a step towards promoting gender equality/mainstreaming and women's rights. While the Affirmation Bill for equitable representation and participation in the House of Representatives was passed in 2016 following a series of consultations, the practical operationalizing of the bill remains a concern and the inquiry whether it would really safeguard the participation of more women continue to loom.

Surely, having a general election where women are selected to represent each geographic community or county in parliament would most certainly undercut the problem of underrepresentation. In addition, the ethos of governance needs to and should practically build on encouraging political will for transparency and accountability. Advancing and adhering to these governance and developmental values would most certainly bridge the gap of marginal representation and in turn embolden participation. This is in the sense that it would necessitate for apt institutional authorities and resources in place to address issues of corruption and inequalities. Alternatively, involvement and participation in leadership should not be perceived as limited to the political and government arena alone, but also in the markets and communities. Therefore, it is important for Liberian women and the society at large to be cognizant of this and monopolize the options to participate proactively and effectively in these arenas. More so, encouraging an approach where women participate by their capacity and capability, rather than viewing leadership only in the formal, creates a level of



complementarity in the process of advancing women's meaningful participation in leadership and decision-making.

Transforming conflicts and creating environments of positive change quintessentially requires that post-conflict processes factor imminent challenges and strategies for moving forward. Literature is replete on the fact that SGBV remains one of the major challenges in most conflict societies and addressing it seems arduous. In the context of post-conflict Liberia, the UN and government already have a joint programme on SGBV, where the concentration has been mostly on building courts, training judges, and ensuring there are protection sections for women, girls, and children in most of the police depots. Likewise, there have been ample awareness and sensitization on SGBV, revolving particularly around issues of rape. With the rape law in place, there is therefore, the need to increase access to justice, seeing as a lot of women are still violated and abused. The justice system must play a larger role in enhancing women's role in peacebuilding processes by passing out punishments to violators, if not, there could be a revolution only by the women.

Also, cognizance must be taken of the fact that some communities have the watchdog systems that empowers its people to develop their own strategies to prevent some of the community challenges and ensure there is zero tolerance of rapes and sexual violence in the communities. Therefore, the recommendation for the implementation of social protection policies and a bottom-bottom approach where such systems can be adopted by the government, external and even some internally well-grounded organizations working with women grassroots groups and communities, to address the SGBV challenges by building more monitoring capacity. Mindful of the cultural barriers that cloud the reporting of such violence, the inclusion of all voices like the ministers, senators, chiefs, teachers, especially the men and boys on the matter will go a long way to underline its severity and the importance to curb such acts and sanction perpetrators. For example, when the HIV awareness started in Uganda, every principal and teachers of secondary schools spoke about it at least twice every week, chiefs, sub-chiefs, district officials spoke about it every week, and awareness was raised as such. Consequently, if same policy is adopted where everybody is engaged to fight against GSBV in Liberia, then the people and communities will own these strategies and not discard of it as something coming from the government and external bodies only.

Patriarchy is quite a complex challenge to women's peacebuilding efforts in Liberia. Addressing patriarchy and the gender inequalities that come with it mainly entails training and nurturing men to be practical and proactive in addressing patriarchy by challenging themselves and their fellow men on their sexist ideologies and practices. Therefore, providing educational opportunities and building the capacities of marginalized groups or people subjugated to patriarchal culture and practices is a given way forward from this challenge. To build such capacities, there is need for skills training and the meaningful involvement of women's organizations to work with communities where patriarchy remains a dominant practice, and to monitor progress and outcomes. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the lack of/or inadequacy of financial resources is a challenge for most women organizations, especially those at the rural grassroots levels. Moving above this challenge, there is need for these organizations to be supported in proposal writing skills to present projects initiatives that would enable them to seek and source funds for their activities from donors and the government. Also, there is need for them to acquire skills in financial capacity training, taking into account that learning these skills would likely lead to their ability to develop their own networks of support.

Generally and as presented in this study, there is no gainsaying how important and impactful women organizations have been in building the Liberia that there is today. However, in the supposed absence of a rally to unite in pursuit of a common goal, the disunity and class divide among them has become a challenge that affects their working together and collaborating as women and women organizations. Apparently, the study found that there is no strategic framework on how women could unite and work together presently. However, the agenda UMIL-OGA is undertaking and implementing in Liberia as discussed in chapter six 6.4.2, is in several ways efforts to forge the unity of women around issues, in order to enable them to start thinking in a more strategic and broader manner in tackling the challenges women are facing in Liberia. For example, looking at the issue of domestic violence and rape, women organizations working on the these issues can conduct research that can be presented to and used by the women legislative caucus for advocating and driving policies to address such challenges in the legislature. Such research can also be used by the Ministry of Gender and other ministries, and for press conferences to lay the facts on the table. Basically, the strategy

here is for women not to work as if they are competing, but to see how they can complement each other in terms of the peacebuilding work they accomplish as women. Besides, Liberian women, whether urban or rural, have a key role to play in ensuring peace and development of Liberia in one way or another. So far, women have taken steps in working on the unity of women in Liberia, evidence being the presence and participation of the Women of Liberia Task Force in the Constitutional review process to tackle issues of women's interests.

In addition, this study ascertained that there is need for the culture of inclusivity between women organizations, as well as across-the-board coordination of activities and equal space for especially grassroots women organizations to express their own ideas on issues and developments in Liberia. It also articulates Mother Mary Brownell's recommendation that Liberian women and women organizations at all levels of the society "*need to observe and practice the basic principles of Liberia's distinctive religions, which cautions Liberians to love, leading to unity and to be more empathetic and be each other's keeper.*" Overall, the study recommends that "the Unity of Liberian Women" can be developed as a "Procreative Concept" out there to see and envisage how the unity of women can be driven into the work and processes they participate in and implement.

#### **8.4. Contribution of the study**

Given the growing attentiveness to the women and peacebuilding discourse, numerous normative, discursive, and critical analyses have been undertaken of the participation and contributions of women to conflict, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding. Therefore, this study made contributions to the emergent literature on this discourse, as well as to the fields of conflict transformation and peace, women, and development studies. A key contribution of the research "*Building Peace in Post-Conflict Societies: An Exploration of the Role of Women in Liberia's Peacebuilding Architecture*" is that, it is one of the first studies to have examined comprehensively the positions, agencies in the pursuit of defined goals, and strategies of women and women organizations in peacebuilding by critically analysing them in the framework of each of the pillars constituting the process of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development. Not only did the study delve into exploring how women fit into the equation of Liberia's post-conflict recovery agenda, but also how their practical and

strategic interests and human and civil rights to equal participation and representation are both meaningfully and substantively integrated into the initiation and implementation of the peacebuilding processes at all levels of society.

The study also made contributions by expounding the women-peacebuilding discourse to embody a comprehensive narrative of a history that has witnessed remarkable changes in the ability of Liberian women to move incrementally from their roles as silent participants in mainstream political, economic, social and security developments of the state, to proactive contributors and architects in same processes. It analysed and established the assortments of ways in which Liberian women influence peacebuilding and decision-making processes; mobilize support, and implement peacebuilding activities. Further contributions were made by establishing that the challenge of unequal representation of women both in politics and peacebuilding processes constitute a key question for theory and practice. The study made an input that in theory, the framework of post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction, and development provides the window of opportunity for the redefinition of gender roles and the rule of law, as well as the platform for women to take up leadership positions from top-down to bottom-up and vice versa. Then, it ascertained that the realization of such theoretical standing boils down to the abilities of government and institutions to establish and practically implement processes that are people-centred, equally inclusive, and gender-responsive to the diverse gender interests of women, not as issues but as needs.

In the area of addressing the challenges to women's peacebuilding roles, the study noted that the strategies in place are bottom-up mechanisms, which though has led to an increased number of cases being reported as compared to before, has not caused the prevention of SGBV acts. Moving forward, the study made a contribution to this effect by recommending the bottom-bottom approach. This approach necessitates that actors and stakeholders, including women's organizations, should go back into the communities to ask the leaders and people about what they as a people can and are doing in the phase of the increasing rape cases; what accountability mechanisms they have emplaced as communities; and what are the key messages upon which they drive and encourage the building and sustainability of their communities. Engaging communities through such inquiries would normally demand participation, responses and solutions that emanate from the people themselves, seeing as

they have knowledge of what is happening and are in a better position to develop and own the strategies for resolution. Formulating an operational framework that builds this bottom-bottom strategy and complemented by the bottom-up approach, would most likely limit the instances of SGBV against women and girls and in communities.

Another key contribution of the study was the methodological use of narrative analysis, which was used to present accounts of the Liberian experience through the eyes of the participants. By using the narrative method, the study was able to connect the trajectories of women's contributions and bearing in Liberia's peacebuilding processes during and in the aftermath of the country's fourteen years of civil war. The approach also served as an essential point of departure for assessing extant and prolific literature on the women and peacebuilding intrinsic links in Liberia, through which the study was able to establish that there was sparse narrative in the areas where the study identified gaps in literature. Addressing the gaps, the study made several contributions to knowledge. First, it put into perspective the nexus between women-peacebuilding by departing from the historical to contemporary perspectives and engendered understanding that women's (sub)conscious participation in peace and decision making processes is not so new a phenomenon and has been long-established on varied responsibilities and approaches. Second, it ventured to deter from the tendency of generalization by espousing post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development framework and Maxine Molyneux's organizational theory. Exploring the applicability of the theories, the study gathered that as diverse and strategic as the processes of post-conflict are, so too are women's roles, experiences, and interests on which their strategic organizational goals for peace are founded.

Overall, the study was quite interdisciplinary and used structurally innovative approaches to convey the experiences of women in peacebuilding by locating the broader study in terms of how peacebuilding and women's organizing is understood from both a deeper critical literary, theoretical, and analytical perspectives. It also embodied societal efforts to appraise the evolving thoughts that if women are accorded more opportunities in governance, Liberia and the African continent could achieve unprecedented levels of development taking into consideration the roles women play in their everyday actions of rebuilding states and nations in the context of post-conflict societies.

## **8.5. Suggestions for further research**

The research findings and areas to which the study made contribution drew attention to the need for future research. For this reason, further research that explores mainly the role of grassroots (rural) women organizations in Liberia and if not other post-conflict societies in Africa in influencing and implementing outcomes of post-conflict peacebuilding and development processes. A study like this is necessary because when examined together with women's organizations at the national (urban) levels, the voices of the later in terms their activities and visible contributions to peacebuilding are often dominant than those of the former who feel excluded and marginalized. Therefore, conducting such a study and sharing the findings would most likely give the women grassroots organizations a sense of belonging.

Moreover, most studies examining the role or link between women organizations and peacebuilding recurrently employ or recommend the bottom-up approach. Blending the bottom-up approach with the bottom-bottom approach which this study earlier recommended as relevant to peacebuilding, would most definitely be an interesting area of research to consider. Such a research can explore the significance of the bottom-bottom approach with the aim of making empirical recommendations. Speaking of approaches, it would be quite relevant to also engage in a study that looks at existing theories like neo-functionalism and constructivism which are linked to current peacebuilding processes in the region that are supported by the United Nations and discuss them in relation to the African Union peace and security architecture.

Researching on the Liberian experience, the study also mentioned the role of women organizations in peacebuilding in countries like Rwanda, South Africa, and Sierra Leone. This spells out the need for further research on comparative case studies that could actually be focused on a sub-region. A research along this line might use both the qualitative and quantitative research methodology (interviews and surveys) to explore the subject and compare levels of representation, participation, and success in influencing outcomes of processes. Such a study would shed more light on the various ways women contribute to peacebuilding and how distinct their role, interests and organizing strategies are. Also, literature in the area of post-conflict peacebuilding would benefit enormously from a study



that capitalizes on making a comparison of other African peacebuilding processes in the continent with the aim to find out how women organizations in other regions of Africa reconcile themselves with the political and socio-economic realities in their efforts and quest to end conflicts and build peace.

The study also recommends research that would aim at critically analysing how peace is built in post-conflict societies and the role of women therein as an indispensable component for attaining sustainable processes should centre on women organizations that emerged after the official end of the Liberian conflict, which is post-2003. In Chapter five of this study, the discussions and analyses focused on the agency, strategies, and activities that drove women and women organizations pursuit for peace during and in the aftermath of conflict in Liberia and how they continue to influence distinctive outcomes of the peacebuilding process. Therefore, undertaking a study that provides a clearly nuanced demonstration of how the roles of women have changed over time and which critically examines how individual women organizations as key actors in post-conflict peacebuilding are mediated in the central state in contemporary, would constitute a good contribution to knowledge and literature in the field. Also, a conducting a study that focuses particularly on women organisations in peacebuilding that emerged in the post-conflict could serve as an impetus for identifying what drives them. Such a study should as well explore new strategies to addressing the many challenges women face in their roles as peacebuilders or further built on those already proposed by this study. It would also be interesting to study the role of women in peacebuilding as a form of agency located in the wider African peace and security architecture, as this would strengthen and expand the current peacebuilding framework in place.

In chapters two and five, this study also thought it was interesting that women as peacemakers in Liberia moved from leveraging their status as non-combatants and as a voice somehow “above” politics to entering the fray of electoral politics and continuing to be effective peacebuilders. In chapter six, the gender politics of having a female president in Liberia and its implication for gender (women) responsive policies and positions in decision making offices, was discussed. Quite interestingly noted was the sentiment and observation that “having elected to power a female leader equals the advancement of women’s interests in Liberia, and some people take her election as a reason to reject further advocacy for women’s



social standing resonates.” It would be worthwhile to further research these perspectives by questioning whether democratic change and the fact of having a woman at the helm of state governance and decision-making entails transformative change around a common agenda or policies for women’s descriptive and most importantly substantive representation. And, would it be any different if it is a democratically elected male at the echelon of decision-making, as is currently the case in Liberia, or should the focal point shift from gender commonalities to the competency of the leader and representatives in positions of decision-making power? A research along this line, aimed at addressing these questions would be a relevant contribution to the women and peacebuilding discourse.

*If there is peace in Liberia today, we the women of Liberia can tap our chests and boldly say, we played a major role”*

(Mother Mary Brownell, July 2015).

*For a narrative of Liberian women’s experiences of conflict to be documented, it must be told in two parts: women as victims of the civil wars, that is, the traditional stories of rape, abuse, violation, and disempowerment of women; and the story of women’s victory over the display of patriarchy and political violence.*

(Leymah Gbowee 2011).

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix I: Liberian Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) – Activism for Peace<sup>58</sup>



**Source:** <https://participationdictionary.wordpress.com/2014/04/25/w-for-wipnet-women-in-peace-building-network-liberia/>

<sup>58</sup> This picture speaks of women's activism for peace that is captured in the messages written on the placards, which not only reflect but tell a story of their organizational agency.



## **Appendix II: Profiles of Organizations that Participated in this Study**

**National Women's Commission of Liberia (NAWOCOL)** was founded in 1991 at the height of Liberia first civil war. During the wars, NAWOCOL's visible peacebuilding role included the provision of humanitarian and relief aid services to the displaced, community awareness and outreach programmes, as well as empowerment and problem-solving initiatives. NAWOCOL as an umbrella network establishment representing most women groups in Liberia, continues to empower and work with women and communities across Liberia.

**Women NGOs Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL)** was founded in 1998 post-first civil war era. Established to coordinate activities across the broad base of women's organizations in Liberia, WONGOSOL continues to deliver on its goals through collaboration, organizational training and support initiatives like its media leadership, advocacy, peacebuilding, education, legal, health and access to information for women programmes. As an umbrella organization, WONGOSOL coordinates a network of 104 member organizations all over the fifteen counties of Liberia, straddling non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community based Organization (CBOs), and faith-based organizations (FBOs).

**Ministry of Gender, Children & Social Protection (MoGCSP or Ministry of Gender)** was formed in by an Act of the National Legislature in 2001. As a government organ, MoGCSP is concerned with the practical implementation of policy instruments such the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UNSCR 1325, CEDAW, and Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC); AU Protocols on Women and Children, on Women Peace and Security; and the Beijing Platform for Action. It works in collaboration with women's organizations as well as international bodies in Liberia to realize its goals of promoting the voices of women, girls and children, among other responsibilities.

**Press Union of Liberia (PUL)** was established in 1964. As an umbrella organization for Liberian media professionals and institutions, PUL's membership network constitutes of more than 500 journalists. Among its many objectives, PUL stands as an advocate of press



freedom, and also assumes the roles of advocacy about matters of social justice, human rights and democratic governance.

**Liberian Female Law Enforcement Association (LIFLEA)** was founded in 2000. The organization has approximately 1000 members in its network. Its objectives include advocating for female security officers in all the security agency (private and Public) in Liberia, advancing for training for security female officers, seeking redress when their rights are trample upon or when they are discriminated against or harassed in within the security sector. LIFLEA advocates for gender mainstreaming within security companies, and provides capacity training for female security personals, etc.

**United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) Office of Gender Advisor (OGA)** is mandated with the facilitation of gender sensitive approaches to the implementation of UNMIL's mandate as it relates to UNSC 1325, including the support and inclusion of women in all UNMIL mandated priorities. Its engagements span a whole range of activities like the "reinforcement of case management systems for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), and the crafting and implementation of a Joint Programme on SGBV." OGA also collaborates with the government MoGCSP and civil society to ensure the benefits of ongoing reform processes accrues to all, especially women.

**Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET)** was established in 2000 during the second Liberian civil conflict, as a regional organization comprising of women from Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, under the patronage of ECOWAS. MARWOPNET is significant for its mobilization, support and participation in efforts to bring peace in the regions, and in the signing of the 2003 Accra Peace Accord that ended the civil war in Liberia. Some of the organization's activities in the area of peace engagements include: mobilizing, building capacity, reinforcing and strengthening the participation of women and women's organizations/groups in conflict prevention and resolution and management activities; lobbying and advocating for the inclusive and equal participation of women in decision-making and implementation of peace and development processes across all sectors of society; trainings women's groups and organizations on issues relating to human rights and gender equality, amongst others.

**West Africa Network for Peacebuilding/Women in Peacebuilding Network (WANEP/WIPNET) Liberia.** WANEP was established in 1998 to provide possible responses to the conflict that had ravished and still remained visible in Liberia. Its projects are focused in the area of peace education, early warning and rapid response initiatives to conflicts, and the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET), which is its biggest of these project. WIPNET Liberia was founded in 2001 to build on the capacity of women, and empower them take up various peace roles, especially during the second civil war under the leadership of Madam Leymah Gbowee. Leymah formed the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace movement under WIPNET, which mobilized Christians and Muslims alike, and women from all backgrounds to non-violently campaign and advocate for no more war but peace in Liberia. The outcome of this agency was the 2003 Accra Agreement.

**Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET) in Bong County** is one of the branch grassroots organization of the larger WIPNET umbrella organization. As its mother branch, this grassroots organization focuses on building peace in their community through community outreach programmes, advocacy and awareness raising on issues of rape, sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), and inheritance and. These women are also involved in the resolution of conflicts through what they call Peace Huts or Palava Huts. This Hut provides platform for members of the community to come present and discussion their problems or conflicts and seek for mechanisms for peaceful resolution of them.

**Development Education Network - Liberia (DEN-L)** was established in 2000 and is based in Bong County. DEN-L focuses on enhancing the voices and participation of grassroots women and communities in the areas of peacebuilding, good governance and sustainable development through literacy training workshops and community awareness among women's groups and local communities.

**Ganta Concern Women Development Association (Ganta Concern Women)** was established in 2002. The organization has more than 500 members, majority of whom are widows, women with low earnings. Its focus activity includes income generating initiatives such as agricultural production of cassava; rotating loan coffers that provide its members the means for resources to undertake productive, viable and profit making initiatives; and

provides day care services for working women. Likewise, the organization provides support and counselling to women and girls who are victims of abuse and violence.

### **Appendix III: Women Rising for Peace - A Narrative**

Women rising for peace is a narrative synopsis that advances Mother Mary Brownell's<sup>59</sup> insight of hers and women's experiences during Liberia's first civil war. These experiences as she noted, unified them to establish a pressure group to make their voices heard and overcome the injustices of the Liberia's devastating civil conflict through transformative activism for peace. This narrative captures the period of 1990 to 1997, that is, the interface of Liberia's first civil war.

It is the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of July 2015 as my field assistant/colleague - Tarnue Marwolo and I - Shulika Stella, walk into the home of one of Liberia's legendary peace activist, Mother Mary Brownell. Ready for our scheduled interview, she welcomes us on her beautiful veranda spot with a smile as I introduce myself and my colleague. Touching base on several other subjects on politics and development, we gradually get to the women and peacebuilding discourse that tells the Liberian story. I reproduce a summary of the conversation with Mother Brownell of below...

[Mother Brownell speaking]...

“Before I talk about ‘us’ - women and peace in Liberia, Stella (referring to me) let me tell you something about Tarnue (referring to my field colleague), his people, and the average Liberians...they are very quick to forget, and that is worrying. I say this in view of the recent bereavement of my friend and associate Sheikh Kafumba Konneh and recall how much he sacrificed for this country. Sheikh Kafumba Konneh<sup>60</sup> and Archbishop Michael K. Francis<sup>61</sup> (both of blessed memory), and myself worked together tirelessly during the Liberia's dark conflict times. Concerned about the devastating nature of the conflict and the general welfare of our people and the country, we founded

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<sup>59</sup> A mother, a legendary peace activist, founding member and president of Liberian Women Initiative, a leading educator, now retired, but still very vocal on matters concerning the welfare, peace and development of women and children in Liberia, and the country as at large.

<sup>60</sup> Sheikh Kafumba Konneh was a prominent Muslim Liberian leader, a peace activist and architect, a pillar of religious tolerance and peaceful co-existence in Liberia, and a serving member of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

<sup>61</sup> Archbishop Michael Francis of the Roman Catholic Church was a human and civil rights activist. His footprints cannot be erased from Liberia's struggle history for peace and respect for human rights. In his resolve for an end to conflict and reinstatement of the state of peace in Liberia, Francis established the Catholic Justice and Peace Council, which was tasked to defend the human and civil rights of the Liberian people under the then regime of President Charles Taylor.

the Inter-Faith Religious Council and met almost on a daily basis at the Catholic Secretariat to plan strategies for peaceful intervention and resolution of the Liberia's conflict. Do you know why I begin by mentioning these peace icons? [She ask me, then continues]... I must acknowledge them because Liberia's peace story can never be told in all completeness without mention of, and recognition of these peace heroes. May they, and all others who fought for peace in Liberia Rest in Peace...

[With a reflective calm, she carried on]...

That you see the Liberia we live in today, is thanks to the worth and fighting spirit in women. One thing for sure, which I can tell you is that the conflict not only changed our political landscape of Liberia, but also the status quo of gender thoughts and experiences of its people, men and women alike, but especially women. I remember thinking in December 1989 following the immediate outbreak of the first civil war, of what could be done to quell the conflict from escalating into what we had seen and heard countries like the Sudans and the DRC experiencing. But then, the magnitude of the war did not give me the space to think at length, but the push to take direct and decisive stance to engage in meaningful action for peace efforts. So I became actively involved in efforts to build and bring back peace to Liberia from 1990 up to 1997 when we had the elections. Working with other women, we had as our focus the objective 'an end to the conflict and peace for our people'. The beginning was not easy, as we were also concerned about those who had been displaced, especially the women and children, and the deplorable condition under which they lived in the displacement centres. Our first engagement was working with the displaced by providing and distributing food to them, caring for them and providing them with trauma counselling. This went on from 1990 until about 1994.

Come 1994, something happened. I don't know whether it was an inspiration from God or something, but this night, I went to bed and a thought came to me 'what we are doing for women, children and all the displaced people at the centres, is good. However, we can do more, since the conflict situation is dire and our children are being killed and forcefully recruited as soldiers, our women are being raped, murdered, and majority becoming the breadwinners of their families and homes, and our men are also being killed and forced into hiding. Thinking of this, the idea of a pressure group occurred to me as a way forward to fight this conflict and its consequences on our people and society. I remember telling myself that we were going to do this not with guns, but with our voices and popular activism as women on a mission to turn the clock of conflict towards the endpoint of peace. As I shared the idea of a pressure group with the women I have been working with, we decided to send out messages to meet at the city hall. Getting there on the scheduled day, the hall was packed with women from all works and backgrounds of life in Liberia. This turn-up for me was a big boost and a green light to the course, as I

smiled from within, I thought - 'with one voice, we would make peace a reality in Liberia'.

Just meeting in the city hall was a risk, and deciding to be the many, yet one voice that intervenes in the conflict was an even bigger risk, as anything could happen to any of us the women and our families at any time. That day, we got to actually discuss the war and shared our experiences, and opened the floor for all who wanted to make the sacrifice for peace, to meet here at my house. A number of women showed up and together we formed the Liberian Women Initiative (LWI) in February of 1994. Coming together as an organization was a great idea, however, the beginning was challenging because we did not even know who was who, given the different backgrounds from which we hailed. Notwithstanding, we deliberated on strategies to end the conflict moving forward, and concluded that our formula for peace activism were to include peaceful demonstrations, advocacy campaigns, addressing the humanitarian needs of the displaced people and the communities, lobbying and networking with institutions and organizations, creating avenues to engage with and facilitate dialogue among warlords, negotiating our way to mediate and participate in peace dialogues, and praying for peace in our various homes and when we gathered as a group.

Putting our strategies into action, we ensured that the leaders of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the United Nations and its agencies, the Organization of African Unity (OAU), the United States organizations and its Embassy in Liberia, were all aware of our predicament. Besides this, the women of LWI were always at the picketing lines with placards and banners that carried different messages for peace. Our voices echoed even as we marched up to the stations and the quarters of the warlords chanting 'we want peace not war; we are your mothers and sisters; stop the fighting, the rape of our girls, the killing of our children, sisters, brothers and husbands and let peace reign'. In one of our many struggles for peace, I remember this particular experience where we the LWI women organized to go speak with the warlords. The arrangements for this meeting was handled by one of our ladies, who opted to facilitate the process. When the day for the scheduled meeting dawned, all the women, about ninety of us gathered to make the trip to Bomi County to dialogue with the warlords, but the lady who had made the arrangements was nowhere to be found. We waited to no avail and finally said our prayers and set off on our journey. More than half way to the Bomi Hills, we were stopped by armed militants at the Po River Bridge. I got down from the bus, thinking that when they see me an elder woman, some of them will give me their respect. One of them, the commander asked me - where are you women going? I responded calling him son, his quick and bitter response was 'I am not your son'. He looked at me uttering 'this is our territory, and I have the authority here. ...I give you and your women five minutes to get out of this place, or we will kill each and every one of you and nothing will happen to us'. As I went back to the bus, one of

the fighters despite the risk of being seen by his fellow fighters, quietly walked up to me and said ‘mami, we knew you were coming and the order is to kill you all. So please enter your buses and go back to the city’. I did not see the lady who made the arrangements until after two when she came to me and she said, Mother Mary, “I am sorry I disappointed you. This is just an example of some of the challenges we faced as women fighting for peace.

We also worked in collaboration with some religious institutions and civil society bodies in Liberia, including but not limited to the Council of Chiefs, the Inter-Faith Mediation Council, the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, and the Muslim Women Federation on different humanitarian, human rights and peace engagements. One thing I can tell you is this, these institutions, especially the Catholic Church came under attack several times. There were also a couple threats and attempts on my life and some of the women’s from Charles Taylor and his rebel factions. Irrespective of this, we did not relent in pushing forth to achieve our agenda of peace in Liberia.

One of our many strategies for peace and for our voices to be heard involved efforts to attend conferences and peace talks. So, each time they were conferences that focused on Liberia in any African region, we mobilized and sought support to purchase travel tickets and attend the talks, even though we were never invited. Encouragingly, our support came from men and women alike. In one incident, we arrived Accra, Ghana in 1994 for one of such conferences and were told – ‘this war is not for women’, and our response was...but we bear the brunt of it...so it is also women’s war. It was ridiculous when the warlords stopped us from entering the conference hall saying we were not part of process. We used the media outlet and implored the rebel delegates on the spot asking if they would let their mothers and sisters come all the way here and be refused to participate in a conference that had to discuss the reality of the situation they were all living in?...At last we were allowed entry under the status observers only. According to the warlords, we were supposed to remain quiet, but then they kept referring back to us, asking our opinions on the deliberations and decisions of the meeting. This was quite remarkable and most importantly signified that we the women of Liberia were making progress in our quest for peace. Following from this, we made our presence felt in all the peace conferences, though we received no official invitations to attend. Our mission was not to relent in our peace efforts until the guns were silent.

In addition to our struggles, a number of developments like the holding of the United Nations Women in Beijing Conference in 1995 further gave us a voice of motivation, a consciousness to strive on and work as a united force. Likewise, the appointment of one of our Muslim activists Ruth Sando Perry in 1996 to oversee the National Transitional Government’s legislative and presidential elections that took place in 1997, was indicative of the significant strides we were making as women. Come 1997 Charles Taylor was president-elect. We achieved peace, though provisional, the platform for



women's recognition was set through our activism... But the worst, another devastating civil war was yet to plunge the country back to chaos and insecurity..."

The establishment of the Liberian Women's Initiative (LWI) represents the historic context of the upsurge of women's organizations and groups, and women rising for peace in Liberia in the immediate conflict outburst and post-conflict dispensation. This is a widespread view expressed by most participants during field research in Liberia, which has also been asserted in the works of authors like Ali Mari Tripp (2015), Robert M. Press (2010), Erica K. Sewell (2007), and William N. Massaquoi (2007). There is therefore this common acknowledgement that the formation of LWI was quite central in the remodelling of Liberian women's aptitude and responsibility to take up more political roles as advocates and peacebuilders and foster theirs and society's transformation through women's movements. Accordingly, Mother Mary Brownell affirms that LWI's pursuit of peace in Liberia also signified a struggle for the rights of women to take up leadership roles, become politically active and participate in decision-making. Likewise, the non-violent strategy employed by the women's movement significantly facilitated and prodded the peace negotiation processes towards the resolution of the conflict, and women's role and agency for peace gained more credibility in the succeeding years of Liberian history.

## Appendix IV: Publication Outcomes of the Study

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### Women and Peace building: From Historical to Contemporary African Perspectives

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#### Abstract

The subject of women and peacebuilding is arguably an area of research, which prior to the 21<sup>st</sup> century remained undeveloped and unexplored in the field of conflict and peace and in the practice of peacebuilding. This development signaled a new attentiveness on the importance of women's roles as indispensable stakeholders in peacebuilding processes. However, pre-contemporary consciousness, women did leverage standard decision-making prowess that served diverse political, socio-economic, and security goals. Through a review of relevant literature and purposive unstructured interviews in Liberia, this paper examines the changing landscape of women's peacebuilding roles using examples from cross-cultural African experiences. The paper asserts that before the internationalization of women's role in the affairs of peacebuilding, women were already subconsciously or consciously involved in such decision-making processes, especially under the aegis of women organizations. Likewise, it contends that patriarchy and marginalization of women was quite in existence and these challenges which are unquestionably in continuity in the contemporary impede women's peacebuilding efforts. From these, this paper contributes to the evolving literature on women and peacebuilding discourses.

**Keywords:** *Women/Women organizations, Peacebuilding, Liberia, African perspectives, International policies*

# Women in Peacebuilding: Influencing Africa's Peace and Security Architecture

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## Abstract

In recent years, the subject of women's recognition, inclusion and participation as important stakeholders in peacebuilding has received substantial attention from policy makers, researchers and scholars across the globe. As such, the women and peacebuilding rapport is today reasonably understood in terms of the assortments of ways in which they are and can be involved and participate in peace and security processes; how they influence the processes; how they mobilise support, and are empowered by different organs and structures; and the reality of the limitations and challenges that confront them in the performance of their roles. Notably, this understanding is commonly and proverbially apparent in conflict and post-conflict societies where women are increasingly ensuring the prioritisation of their voices and actions in decision-making structures of peace and security, with the intention to influence and contribute to effective implementation outcomes. In the case of Africa, the gradual but momentous shifts and responsiveness to women's roles have seen them evolving and building their capacities and expertise as agents and architects of peace and security, and of political and socio-economic development. While these developments and women's proactive participation are imperative to achieving and sustaining 'a peaceful and secure Africa' as outlined in the African Agenda 2063, the realism of prevailing institutional, traditional, social and systematic injustices and challenges antagonising them stand to greatly impede their efforts, notably at the grassroots level. In light of these, the study attempts to address questions such as; how do women contribute to peace and security governance? What mechanisms can be put in place to address the challenges confronting their roles as peace builders? How can their involvement and participation be reinforced to better achieve the goal of a peaceful and secure Africa? Drawing insight from personal observations through engagements with women peacebuilders, existing literature and scholarly works, policy frameworks and documented reports, the study therefore discusses the role of African women in balancing Africa's current and future peace and security goals. It does so by expounding on women's opportunities and challenges of involvement through the lens of their experiences in Liberia and Rwanda. Likewise, the study proposes a rights-based perspective to be a significantly inclusive and people-driven approach for fostering the objectives of Africa's peace and security agenda.

**Key Words:** Women, peacebuilding, Agenda 2063, Liberia and Rwanda, rights-based approach.

62

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<sup>62</sup> This paper was presented at the African Unity for Renaissance Conference and Africa Day Expo, 22-25 May 2015 - Tshwane, South Africa. The full paper has been double, blind, peer-reviewed and accepted for the final review process reviewed, as Book Chapter for the 5<sup>th</sup> African Unity for Renaissance Publication Series. The paper adopts the African Institute of South Africa (AISA) Author Guidelines and referencing style.



# Changing the Rules of Engagement: Women's Approaches to Peacebuilding Leadership in Liberia

Lukong Stella Shulika<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

A window of opportunity for women to consciously arise from their subconscious leadership and peace roles in society and grace the public scenes with affirmative activism, taking thought-provoking steps as need be to become beacons of peace in Liberia – represents the narratives of Liberian women in their pursuit of peace. While the brunt of the Liberian civil wars on the populace, especially women, was enormous, truth remains that the wars immensely transformed the country's gender relations, norms, and roles. Likewise, it borne the increase realization that women like men also nurture the capacity to translate conflict situations through their decisive politicking for peace. Building on this context, this study critically examines the role of Liberian women in changing the country's conflict and politically unstable landscape to that of peace. It further interrogates where Liberian women are at today in their roles as peacebuilders, and how the ideal of having a female president has impacted on women's political representation and participation in governance and decision making processes.

63

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<sup>63</sup> This paper, "Changing the Rules of Engagement: Women's Approaches to Peacebuilding Leadership in Liberia." Was presented at *the Fifth Biennial Interdisciplinary Conference on Race*. November 9 -11, 2017. Monmouth University, West Long Branch, NJ –USA

## Appendix V: Gatekeepers Letter for Field Research in Liberia

YES Compound, Camp Johnson Road, Monrovia, Liberia



Phone: 0880678701 Email: libngowomen@yahoo.com

20<sup>th</sup> June 2014

Lukong Stella Shulika  
School of Social Sciences  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Private Bag X01, Scottsville  
Pietermaritzburg, 3209  
South Africa.

Dear Ms. Shulika

**Re: Request for Permission to conduct Research on Women and Peacebuilding with Women's NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL) and its Member Organisations in Liberia**

This document serves to acknowledge receipt, and grant approval to your request letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> June 2014, seeking authorization to engage WONGOSOL as well as its member and collaborating organisations and groups in focus group discussions and individual interviews for the purposes of your PhD research project.

Given our endeavours as women organisations to build a gender inclusive society, empower women and build their capacities; understanding how societies often limit and challenge women; and conscious of the need and importance of women's role and evident contributions to the development of societies, we are nothing but keen to be of assistance, to contribute and share our works and experiences with you.

Therefore, accept the assurances of our esteemed regards as we look forward to your safe arrival in Liberia to undertake your research with us.

Sincerely,

  
Marpile M. Speare  
Executive Director/WONGOSOL



## Appendix VI: Cover Letter and Document of Informed Consent



University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Private Bag X01, Scottsville 3209  
Pietermaritzburg  
South Africa

28<sup>th</sup> August 2014

Dear Participant(s),

### Re: Cover Letter and Document of Informed Consent

My name is **Lukong Stella Shulika (Student No: 212552417)**. I am a Cameroonian pursuing my Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, South Africa. As a central requirement for my successful attainment of this degree programme, I am carrying out a research project titled **“Building Peace in Post-conflict Societies: An exploration of the Role of Women in Liberia’s Peacebuilding Architecture.”** The aim of this research study is to appraise and generate critical insight on the role of women in the nexus of Liberia’s post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction processes. Thus, the study seeks to interrogate how women and women organising informed by their practical and strategic interests, and the need for positive political and socio-economic change in the post-conflict have been and continue to work in different capacities to influence and contribute to the processes of peace, security and development in Liberia since 2003 to 2013. Likewise, the study focuses on examining and gaining understanding of the institutional and operational challenges that confront women in their roles as peace builders.

In order to achieve the intended objectives of this project, you are cordially invited to participate in the study. Your participation will certainly help in generating information that will further add to and contribute to knowledge on the role and experiences of women in the practice of peacebuilding. It may or will as well increase your understanding of how women and women organisations at all levels of the society can draw from their various interests and skills, and work in partnership across different sectors engaging an integrated operational framework of activities to further influence the outcome of Liberia’s peace and reconstruction goals. By sharing your experiences in this regards, information gotten from you will be used to arrive at policy recommendations, which may be sourced to advance the involvement of women in Liberia’s peacebuilding architecture and other post-conflict African societies at large.

Therefore, please do note that:

1. This study is solely for academic purposes and the information gathered will be used to complete this research project for my doctoral thesis at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
2. Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary, and may refuse to participate or withdraw from the project at any stage and for any reason without any form of disadvantage.
3. The focus group discussion/interview will take about 60 to 90 minutes



4. Confidentiality and anonymity of records identifying you as a participant in the study will be maintained in strict confidence and protected by as per the University of KwaZulu-Natal's ethical policies.
5. Your responses and views as a participant are valuable irrespective of their nature
6. The record as well as other items associated with the focus group/interview will be held in a password-protected file accessible only to myself and my supervisors, and will be disposed of by shredding and burning after a period of 5 years, in line with the rules of the university.
7. Apart from my sincere gratitude and appreciation, there is no promise of any form of compensation should you participate in the study.
8. The findings of this study will also be presented at conferences or in articles or a book at some time in the future, and due acknowledgement will be made of all participants while concealing your identity
9. If you agree to participate please sign the declaration attached to this statement overleaf on the third page.

Should you have any questions or concerns about the study or participating in it, please feel free to contact me, my supervisor or the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) Research Office at the addresses provided below.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

**PhD Student/Researcher:**

Lukong Stella Shulika  
Conflict Transformation & Peace Studies  
School of Social Sciences  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Pietermaritzburg 3209, South Africa  
Email: [lukongstella@gmail.com](mailto:lukongstella@gmail.com) /  
[212552417@stu.ukzn.ac.za](mailto:212552417@stu.ukzn.ac.za)  
Mobile No: +27 78 066 4553.

**Thesis Supervisor:**

Dr Janet Muthuki  
Lecturer, Gender Studies  
School of Social Sciences  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Private Bag X01, Scottsville  
Pietermaritzburg 3209, South Africa  
Email: [muthuki@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:muthuki@ukzn.ac.za)  
Telephone: +27 33 260 6462.

**HSSREC Research Office:**

Ms Phumelele Ximba  
University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za)  
Phone number +27 31 260 3587.



## **DECLARATION**

I....., hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire. I understand the intention of the research, and I hereby agree to participate.

I consent to have this focus group discussion/interview recorded

### **Participant**

Signature: .....

Date: .....

### **Researcher**

Signature: .....

Date: .....

## Appendix VII: Ethical Clearance Letters - UKZN



08 October 2014

Ms Lukong Stella Shulika (212552417)  
School of Social Sciences  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/1151/014D

Project title: Building peace in post-conflict societies: An exploration of the role of women in Liberia's Peacebuilding Architecture

Dear Ms Shulika,

### Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 10 September 2014, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....  
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Janet Muthuki  
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Sabine Marschall  
Cc School Administrator: Ms Nancy Mudau

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/83504557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: [ximbao@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbao@ukzn.ac.za) / [snymarrm@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snymarrm@ukzn.ac.za) / [mohunod@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunod@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



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Funding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville



5 July 2018

Ms Lukong Stella Shulika (212552417)  
School of Social Sciences  
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Shulika,

Protocol reference number: HSS/1151/014D

Project title: Building peace in post-conflict societies: An exploration of the role of women in Liberia's Peacebuilding Architecture

**Recertification Approval**

This letter confirms that you have been granted Recertification Approval for a period of one year from the date of this letter. This approval is based strictly on the research protocol submitted in 2014.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

.....  
Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)  
Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Dr Janet Muthuki  
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor Maheshvari Naidu  
Cc School Administrator: Ms Nancy Mudau

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)

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Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)

 1910 - 2010   
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## Appendix VIII: Interviews and Focus Group Discussion Questions



### Interview Questions

Research Topic: **Building Peace in Post-conflict Societies: An exploration of the Role of Women in Liberia's Peacebuilding Architecture**

The following questions serve as part of a research project carried out by Lukong Stella Shulika – a PhD candidate of Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa on the role of women in Liberia's peacebuilding process.

#### **Semi-structured interviews with individual leaders or members of women organizations and groups**

1. Date of Interview: ..... Name of Interviewer: .....
2. Organisation or group .....
3. Level of Education: {a} University; {b} Secondary; {c} Primary; {d} No formal education; {e} Other .....
4. What is your position in this organisation?
5. How long have you been involved with this organisation?
6. Do you see or pride yourself as a peace builder? If yes, why? And what are the policies guiding your position and women's general peacebuilding roles in your organization/group?
7. To what extent are these policies representative of women's interests both practical and strategic and the defined priorities for peace or the pillars of post-conflict reconstruction framework?
8. Where do international, regional and national provisions guiding and advocating for the role of women in peacebuilding fit in your programmes, and do they align or influence the directions of your projects?
9. How would you describe the role of women and the work of your organization/group in Liberia's peacebuilding processes?
10. Looking at the role women played in influencing the end of the Liberian conflict in 2003, would you say it changed the way women were viewed and related to before in terms of their role in society? If so, how?
11. What does having a female president mean for you as a woman, and what influence has it had on your role and women's general standings in terms of their representation and participation in decision-making affairs of the state?
12. How do you address or respond to the specific dynamics that underlie the processes of peacebuilding as well as your role as a peace builder?
13. What resources are available in facilitating your participation in the peace and reconstruction processes?
14. How do you establish linkages with, and strengthen your capacity and the relationship between your organisation/group with other stakeholders likewise involved in empowering the long-term outcome of peace?
15. What impediments have you experienced as a woman involved in building peace in your community and society as a whole?





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## Interview Questions

**Research Topic: Building Peace in Post-conflict Societies: An exploration of the Role of Women in Liberia's Peacebuilding Architecture**

The following questions serve as part of a research project carried out by Lukong Stella Shulika – a PhD candidate of Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa on the role of women in Liberia's peacebuilding process.

### **Semi-structured interviews with individual women from selected women-headed government institutions**

1. Date of Interview: ..... Name of Interviewer: .....
2. Government Ministry ---
3. Level of Education ----
4. Are you a member of any women organisation or group?
5. What is your position in the Ministry?
6. How long have you been working with the Ministry?
7. What are the main underpinning issues embedded in your Ministry with regards to advancing women's roles as peace builders?
8. Have there been any legislative reviews regarding the rights and roles of women in decision-making processes since 2003 in Liberia?
9. If yes, when and what changes were made, and have they influenced or been of benefit to women as equal citizens of the state in the performance of their peacebuilding duties?
10. What are the frameworks or agendas guiding your Ministry's involvement in enhancing the role of women and women organising in Liberia's peacebuilding processes?
11. How well has the leadership of your Ministry together with the different women networks complied with or worked in partnership to achieve these agendas?
12. What are the main functions performed by your Ministry with regards to endorsing and implementing policy instruments on the role of women in peace, security and development processes in Liberia?
13. What would you recommend as mechanisms that can be put in place to strengthen and improve the impact of women's role in peacebuilding?



### Questions for Focus Group Discussions

#### Research Topic: **Building Peace in Post-conflict Societies: An exploration of the Role of Women in Liberia's Peacebuilding Architecture**

The following questions serve as part of a research project carried out by Lukong Stella Shulika – a PhD candidate of Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa on the role of women in Liberia's peacebuilding process.

#### **Focus Group Discussions with selected women organizations and groups in Liberia**

1. What is the main focus or aim of your working together as women under the auspices of this organization/group?
2. Globally and nationally, there has been the adoption and implementation of a series of resolutions and provisions that seek to recognize women's rights and empower them as equal participants in decision-making and leadership processes. What are some of these provisions and how do you integrate them into your working goals and focus?
3. What are the goals and interests upon which this organization was established? (Interests in this context refers to both the practical and strategic interests – and by practical interests I mean your immediate basic material needs; and strategic interests refer to those complex and long-term transformational needs relating to issues like (un)equal gender relations, empowerment of women, lobbying of government etc).
4. What does building peace in the post-conflict mean to you as women and as an organization?
5. Do your organizational goals and interests inform your roles and contributions to the processes of peacebuilding, and how?
6. What programmes or projects have been and are central to the implementation of your works as peace builders or proactive participants in Liberia's post-war reconstruction processes?
7. Why did you become a part of women organizing for peace? And what has been your experiences being women peace builders?
8. What has been the outcomes (successes) of your roles as peace builders? And have your participation in these peacebuilding roles impacted any form or level of change and development in your communities and society at large?
9. What has been your biggest or major achievements as women or women organizing for peace?
10. Given that issues of legitimacy (by legitimacy, I mean the social, economic and political rights of women and society at large) are and remain an important component for long-term peace and development, how and in what ways have you or do you engage and advance this matter in your programmes and projects?
11. Where would you say Liberian women are at today in their peace and reconstruction efforts? (Also, reflect back to the period since formation of your organization and the end of the Liberian civil war).
12. What has changed in Liberia and in the leadership role, inclusion and empowerment of women in decision-making and peace processes since the election of Africa's first female President – Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf?
13. In terms of networking and collaborating your programmes for peace, how do you liaise such collaborations, and do they run across the various networks of women organizations/groups?
14. Taking from your general and specific experiences as peacebuilders, who in your views are the key peacebuilding actors and stakeholders in Liberia?
15. Let's talk about the major challenges confronting you as women and women organizing in your peacebuilding efforts? And how do you think these can be remedied?

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You are welcome to add views, insights and questions that you feel have not been addressed in these questions and discussions

**Thank you for your participation**



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## Interview Questions

Research Topic: **Building Peace in Post-conflict Societies: An exploration of the Role of Women in Liberia's Peacebuilding Architecture**

The following questions serve as part of a research project carried out by Lukong Stella Shulika – a PhD candidate of Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa on the role of women in Liberia's peacebuilding process.

**Semi-structured interviews with men from civil society, grassroots networks, government, media and academic institutions**

1. Date of Interview: ..... Name of Interviewer: .....
2. Organisation or group .....
3. Level of Education: {a} University; {b} Secondary; {c} Primary; {d} No formal education; {e} Other .....
4. What is your occupation in this institution?
5. What does peacebuilding mean to you as a man?
6. What exactly constitute your interest in building peace in post-conflict Liberia?
7. Are you aware of the role women are playing in Liberia's peace and reconstruction processes?
8. If yes, can you please explain your understanding of their roles?
9. In your role as a peace builder, practitioner or analyst, have you, or do you collaborate with women or participate, or are a member of a women organisation/group?
10. Talking about peacebuilding, can you share your views regarding the role and contributions of women in Liberia's peace and reconstruction processes?
11. How would you define women's peacebuilding roles?
12. What are the main factors that influence your perspectives of women as likewise important role-players in peace?
13. What can or would you say about having a female president vis-à-vis gender or women policies and women's involvement in decision-making processes?
14. Would you say it is just as easy for women to strive as peace builders as it is for men? If yes or no, why?
15. What are your views and perspectives on how to enhance women's roles as peace builders?





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## Interview Questions

Research Topic: **Building Peace in Post-conflict Societies: An exploration of the Role of Women in Liberia's Peacebuilding Architecture**

The following questions serve as part of a research project carried out by Lukong Stella Shulika – a PhD candidate of Conflict Transformation and Peace Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa on the role of women in Liberia's peacebuilding process.

### Semi-structured interviews with an individual from UNMIL Office of Gender Advisor

1. Date of Interview: ..... Name of Interviewer: .....
2. UN Department .....
3. Level of Education: {a} University; {b} Other post-secondary education .....
4. Age: {a} 25-34; {b} 35-44; {c} 45-54; {d} 55-64; {e} >65
5. What is your position in the UNMIL Office of Gender Advisor?
6. How long have you been working with UNMIL Office of Gender Advisor?
7. What and which activities is UNMIL Office of Gender Advisor involved in?
8. Which women organizations, groups and Government Ministry is UNMIL Office of Gender Advisor working in collaboration with?
9. What does the presence of UNMIL office of Gender Advisor mean to the various women organization working to contribute to long-term peace and development in Liberia?
10. Is UNMIL office of Gender Advisor assisting in the realisation of the peacebuilding interests of the various women networks in Liberia? And how?
11. How successful have the role of UNMIL been in enhancing the roles of women in Liberia's peacebuilding architecture?
12. Does UNMIL have mechanisms in place to stem the tide of women operationalizing for peace at the national and grassroots levels? What are these mechanisms?
13. How and to what extent have these mechanisms been put to work or yielded outcomes?
14. What are the challenges of implementing these instruments and how can they be addressed?
15. As a representative unit of a mother organization focusing on issues of peace and security in the world, how would you describe the role Liberian women are playing in bringing about peace and development in their communities and societies at large?
16. What in your views can be done to further reinforce women's peacebuilding roles in Liberia?

## Appendix IX: Pictures from Field Research in Liberia

*Considering that discourse/narrative analysis were used in this study, appending the photographs below is necessary and represents an essential component of the narration method that puts a face to one of the key participants (Mother Mary Brownell) and visually reflects the constitution of the focus group discussions for this study. The turnout for the FDGs as explained in chapter four and captured in the pictures indicate the zealously of the women to share their stories, past and present alike, which characterize their experience of peacebuilding in Liberia. The images of the FDG sessions also reveal a rhetorical description that aims at illustrating sense of the women's commitment to their course, rather than just making reference to it. Plus, the photos mirror my presence in the discussions that enabled me to learn, analyse and draw lessons and conclusions from the shared experiences of the research participants.*



Photo Credit: - Shulika LS (July 2015). Photo of Mother Mary Brownell (of blessed memory), Tarnue Marwolo, and myself after our interview session at her home in Monrovia, Liberia. Unpublished Photograph.



Photo Credit: - Shulika LS (July 2015). Focus Group Discussion session with some of WIPNET women in Gbargna City, Bong County, Liberia. Unpublished Photograph.



Photo Credit: - Shulika LS (July 2015). Focus Group Discussion meeting with some members of Ganta Concern Women organization in Ganta City, Nimba County, Liberia. Unpublished Photograph.