



**Universidad  
Europea** VALENCIA

**International Relations Global Bachelor's Degree**

**Bachelor's Thesis**

**Empowering Women's Civic and Political Participation: The Role of Women's  
Organizations in Post-Conflict Liberia**

**Presented by:**

**Victoria Berg**

**Directed by:**

**Prof. Thomas Kruiper**

**May 2023**



## **Acknowledgements**

This thesis is made possible by several important people in my life.

Firstly, thank you to my mom (mamma), for passing on her curiosity and hard-working spirit to me.

Especially, do I appreciate my supervisor Dr. Thomas Kruiper for his advice, guidance, and encouragement before, throughout, and after this work. His role as my professor has also gifted me with the ability to think critically and to always seek beyond what first meets the eye.

Also, thank you to Universidad Europea de Valencia that has allowed me to pursue my education across borders, cultures, and languages, in the most relevant way for an international relations student. My classmates are also to be mentioned, as we have shared incredible moments together both in joy and despair.

A special thanks is granted to the kind people I encountered in Liberia. This work would not be possible without seeing the efforts that are implemented into the Liberian society by organizations such as ZOA or Angie Brooks International Centre to ensure sustainable development. The generosity to share information and input of your own experiences has been much appreciated and highly valuable. Thank you to all others that have taken part of this journey.

Thank you. Gracias. Dankjewel. Takk.

## **Abstract and Keywords**

Women's active participation in political and civic life has gained recognition of being an inherent part of an effective peacebuilding strategy. The context of Liberia, as a post-conflict society, presents unique challenges that require tailored solutions to address gender disparities and promote inclusive governance. This research tries to answer the question on how women's organizations have contributed to sustainable peace through empowering women in civic and political spaces. In particular it investigates the surge of women's organizations and the space they operate in. The findings presented are based on a document analysis of relevant project reports, as well as an extensive literature review on the underdeveloped topic of women as peacebuilders in post-conflict situations. It presents two mechanisms that includes women in the peacebuilding process (1) Appreciative Inquiry (AI), and (2) the Women's Situation Room (WSR). Lastly, it concludes with the role that women's organizations have taken in post-conflict Liberia, being a transformative one, but not one of radical change. Importantly, in the transformative change observation, remains the push for women's political and civic participation.

*Keywords: women in peacebuilding, Liberia, gender equality, civic and political participation*

## Abbreviations

ABIC	Angie Brooks International Centre
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECOWAS	Economic Community Of West African States
EWER	Early Warning Early Response
GBV	Gender Based Violence
LURD	Liberian United R
LWI	Liberian Women's Initiative
MARWOPNET	The Mano River Union Women's Peace Network
MODEL	Movement For Democracy In Liberia
NAWOCOL	National Women's Commission Of Liberia
NEC	National Elections Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
PPI	Positive Peace Index
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNMIL	United Nations Mission To Liberia
UNSCR	United Nations Security Resolution
WIPNET	Women In Peace Building Network
WPS	Women Peace Security
WSR	Women's Situation Room

## Index

<b>Chapter 1 - Introduction .....</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 Problem Statement.....	8
1.2 Case Study Selection.....	9
<b>Chapter 2 – Contextual Overview .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 The Liberian Civil Wars .....	11
2.2 Women as Peacemakers .....	13
2.3 The Transition to Peace.....	14
<b>Chapter 3 - Literature Review and Theoretical Framework .....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1 Theoretical Concepts.....	15
3.1.1 Peace.....	15
3.1.2 Peacebuilding .....	15
3.1.2.1 Women in Peacebuilding .....	16
3.1.3 Women Empowerment .....	16
3.1.4 Civic and Political Participation .....	17
<b>Chapter 4 - Methodology.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Chapter 5 – Research Findings.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>5.1 Awakened Resilience - Paving the Way for Women’s Participation .....</b>	<b>21</b>
5.2 Challenges to Civic and Political Participation .....	22
5.3 The Scope of Action of Women’s Organizations in Liberia.....	24
5.3.1 Bridging the Gap .....	24
5.3.2 Elections.....	25
<b>Chapter 6 - Strategies on Empowering Women in Civic and Political Spaces..</b>	<b>27</b>
6.1 Women’s Situation Room .....	27
6.2 Appreciative Inquiry .....	29
<b>Chapter 7 - Conclusion.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Chapter 8 - Bibliography .....</b>	<b>36</b>

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

Post-conflict societies present complex challenges and opportunities for achieving sustainable peace, reconstruction, and development. Over the last two decades, the role of women's political and civic participation in peacebuilding has gained momentum. Especially after the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security that recognizes women as a cornerstone to all levels of conflict resolution, peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction. This recognition reflects a change in the post-conflict society, as one that involves several actors and level of authorities in society.

Similar to numerous post-conflict societies, Liberia encounters distinct obstacles that require customized approaches in addressing gender inequalities and fostering inclusive governance. While the attention is there, the action can be questioned as women are still excluded from decision-making positions. The cycle of war and peace in Liberia provides an interesting case to study as it demonstrates a remarkable women's initiative and visible environment of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the search for peace. In the wake of the civil war, women's organizations emerged as powerful agents of change, working tirelessly to promote peace. Today, the opportunity of women's participation in civic and political spaces is deeply entrenched by patriarchal norms, a lack of political will and limited resources.

Importantly, the peacebuilding response and initiatives in post-conflict Liberia are based on one of the bloodiest civil wars that Africa has ever seen, killing more than 200 000 people and displacing over a million more. Although the current situation is one without a war-status, many aspects point to a non-peaceful society.

## **1.1 Problem Statement**

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the peacebuilding initiatives women's organizations have implemented in post-conflict Liberia to foster long-lasting peace through civic and political engagement.

Top-down development initiatives have faced considerable criticism from development scholars, experts, and grassroots movements, resulting in a shift towards bottom-up interventions in recent decades. These participatory approaches are regarded as more democratic and context-sensitive when compared to top-down approaches. However, the effectiveness of bottom-up, community-led development initiatives in achieving desired outcomes continues to be a matter of exploration. Further research is necessary to identify methods that can enhance women's political engagement and assess the resulting impact.

The research question of this study is therefore as following: *'How have women's organizations in post-conflict Liberia contributed to empowering women in civic and political spaces?'*

In detail, the research further investigates (1) how women's organizations gained momentum in the post-conflict Liberian society, and (2) which barriers are contributing to the optimal implementation of the initiatives aiming to enhance inclusive governance. Importantly, this research does cover the importance of women's organizations in carrying out peacebuilding activities, but it does not exclude the importance of other actors in peacebuilding-activities nor the activities and efforts of other organizations that are not mentioned in this paper. In the following chapter, the context of Liberia is presented. Chapter 3 discusses relevant literature and research that has been made in this area, as well as the theoretical framework. Chapter 4 elaborates on the methods of the study. Chapter 5 and 6 present the findings of the study. Lastly, the thesis will end with concluding remarks on the study.



## 1.2 Case Study Selection

The case of women's organizations and its effort to promote women in civic and political spaces in Liberia represents an interesting one and refer to many relevant aspects of the understanding of contemporary peacebuilding. Post-conflict Liberia emerges in the wake of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security which recognizes the importance of involving women and their needs at all levels of conflict resolution, peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction. Interestingly, Liberia was the first country to develop a National Action Plan on 1325. Following it, the Women, Peace, and Security Agenda emphasizes women as security agents in society. The topic is also reflected in the 'zeitgeist' of the Liberian gendered development schemes, pointing specifically the National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (2019-2023), and the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (2018-2023).

Furthermore, in the context of this thesis and the notion of women in peacebuilding, it is also essential to draw the parallel between sustainable peace and sustainable development. Referring to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the idea of including women and women's organizations in peacebuilding-processes lies in the heart of the vision of the agenda 'to leave no one behind'. In one way it enhances the protection of vulnerable groups in society, but it also calls for a collective effort demanding stakeholder with differentiated responsibility to translate its commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into reality. Women therefore take on the role as both the ones that secure, as well as those who are being secured, leading to the holistic revelation that the agenda embraces. In the case of post-conflict societies, the SDGs provide a solid foundation for delivering on peacebuilding and state building goals (OECD, 2016), and women have a pivotal role to play in all SDGs. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, endorsed on 27 July 2015 by 193 UN Member States, keeps a basis for implementing the 2030 Agenda and stated that "women's empowerment is vital for sustainable development as well as for sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth" (*Third International Conference on Financing for Development*, n.d.). Although issues related to women, peace, and

security appear across the whole SDG agenda, two SDGs can directly be attributed: (1) SDG5 Gender Equality, and (2) SDG16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions.

SDG 5 seeks to end violence and discrimination against women and girls, but also to provide them with equal access to education, health care, economic opportunity, political participation, and gender parity aspects in all aspects of society (Eriksson, 2016). Gender equality and women's empowerment figure prominently in the 2030 Agenda. They are reflected in an integrated manner throughout the Agenda, and also considered critical for its achievement: in the resolution on the Agenda, the General Assembly declared that "realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the goals and targets" (Eriksson, 2016). Specifically, in relation to the research of this paper, is target 5.5 relevant: "ensuring women's full participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political economic and public life".

SDG 10 is also relevant to mention as it aims to reduce inequalities. More specific target 10.2 to "empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status». Similarly, the project contributes to SDG 16 aiming to promote peaceful societies at national levels, with target 16.7 committed to ensure responsive, inclusive, and representative decision-making. Lastly, SDG17 is also relevant within the domain of peacebuilding as it focuses on fostering partnerships for the goals.

The objectives of the SDGs are multi-dimensional. A cross-sectorial realization of women's roles would help to reach other development goals. According to the United Nations Development Program (2016), a 1 % increase in gender inequality reduces a country's human development index by 0.75 %. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2008) also highlights that if female human capital were used globally, several advantages would take place.

Lastly, the interest of women's organizations in Liberia sparked my interest after I completed my internship in Liberia Monitors 2022. Being able to work with projects implemented by organizations contributing to enhance women's empowerment made me curious about the impact it made in the field. Furthermore, as an election is coming up in 2023, the topic of civic and political participation caught my attention particularly.

## Chapter 2 – Contextual Overview

### 2.1 The Liberian Civil Wars

Liberia's history and background serve as an understanding to the current attitudes in the society of today. The country is marked by ethnic, social, and economic divergences, much due to a turbulent past.

Liberia was founded in 1848 by the descendants of enslaved people in America returning to Africa (Americo-Liberians). The Americo Liberians dominated the country's politics, marginalizing the indigenous Liberians. In 1980, the indigenous Samuel Doe went through with a coup, which ultimately ended the Americo- Liberian rule and established a 10-year dictatorship. The regime was unpopular but remained in power in part because of financial and political support from the United States which feared Liberia might fall into the Soviet camp (McCarthy, 2011).



Figure 1. Map of Liberia

Later, Liberia went through a civil war that can be divided into two eras: (1) 1989-1997, and (2) 1999-2003.

On December 24, 1989, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by the former head of state, Charles Taylor, seized the north of the country to overthrow the Doe regime. After the 1989 coup, the NPFL gained control over most of the country

within a year. In the first months of the conflict the NPFL was disorganized and poorly armed, and its ranks used it as an opportunity to seek revenge on ethnic groups that the Doe regime had favored. However, the Government's attacks against civilians drove youth to the NPFL's ranks and it grew in strength.

In August 1990, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) deployed a military intervention force—the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), with the mission to establish a ceasefire and prevent the conflict from spilling over into neighboring states (McCarthy, 2011). After years of bloody fights, leaders of seven armed factions signed the Abuja Peace Agreement and stability was achieved, at least temporary (Kuperman, 2015). As per the agreement, Liberia held elections in 1997, paving way for the presidency of Charles Taylor. The elections further allowed Taylor's continuation of old practices such as corruption, repression of dissent and exploitation of ethnic divisions, which eventually led to renewed conflict.

The second phase of the civil war started in 1999 when a rebel movement formed by Liberian exiles in West Africa, the Liberia United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), started attacking government forces which again sparked a full-blown civil war. By 2003, another armed faction, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), arose to unseat Taylor from power. At this point, the country was suffering a humanitarian crisis. Furthermore, Taylor's presidency was marked by human right abuses, widespread corruption, and arms smuggling (Galvanek & Suah Shilue, 2021).

A number of NGOs and women's groups played important roles to bring the conflict to an end. Christian and Muslim women gathered to form the Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace Campaign (Ouellet, 2013). They demanded peace and called upon the leaders of warring factions and soldiers to bring an end to the devastating war (Garnett, 2016). With increasing pressure from the international community, Charles Taylor fled from Liberia to seek refuge in Nigeria. On August 18, 2003, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of the Accra Peace Accord between the government of Liberia and the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia, and Political Parties (CPA), was signed by the LURD, MODEL, eighteen political parties and various Liberian civil society groups (Tolu Afolabi, 2018). Liberians essentially endured fourteen years of prolonged conflict. In addition to devastating Liberia's economy and infrastructure, the conflict resulted in a dire situation for the country. In 2003, Liberia was placed at the second-

to-last position, ranking 174th out of 175 countries on the United Nations Human Development Index (2003). This index assesses health and living conditions and revealed that 80 percent of Liberians lived below the poverty line, while unemployment rates exceeded 90 percent. These extreme conditions provided women with a significant opportunity to actively contribute to peacebuilding efforts in various dimensions.

## **2.2 Women as Peacemakers**

As briefly mentioned in the previous section, did women's organizations play an integral role in ending the civil war. In 1994, the Liberian Women Initiative (LWI) was established with the focus of mediating, lobbying support and networking to bring an end to the conflict. Another organization, WIPNET was launched by the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), with the perspective that effective and inclusive peace in post-conflict settings include enhancing women's visibility (Garnett 2021). During the conflict itself, the women organized the "Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace Campaign", advocating for a ceasefire with non-violent demonstrations for peace. Later, they became involved in the demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration of ex-combatants, before turning their attention to the electoral campaign of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf.

In the aftermath, The Mano River Union Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) and the Women in Peace Building Network (WIPNET) grew out of women's response to the Liberian civil war. They assembled although they were from ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds to advocate for peace throughout the region. Later, it gained international recognition in the human rights area when it received the United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights both for its "initiatives to restore peace and to ensure that women's voices are included at all levels of the decision-making process" and for their success in "bringing the heads of states of their countries to the negotiating table in 2001 and as a delegate, mediator and signatory to the Liberian peace talks" (McCarthy, 2011). Other women's organizations that have taken part of Liberia's post-conflict reconstruction era, will be presented as a part of the findings in Chapter 5 and 6.

### **2.3 The Transition to Peace**

The end of a civil war is often viewed as an opportunity to rebuild society and push through difficult reforms (Fuest, 2010). In Liberia, post-conflict peacebuilding is characterized by the presence of various actors, due to a civil war that disrupted the judicial, political, economic, and social systems of the country. The country's GDP fell by over 90% during the time of the war (Radelet, 2007). The official transition to peace began on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2003, when the Liberian government, the rebels and political parties signed the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The agreement influenced the establishment of the United Nations Mission to Liberia. At the time, research pointed to a high percentage of post-conflict states erupting into violence after peace agreements were reached, with one of the main reasons being failed peacebuilding efforts. Moreover, The UN Secretary-General, in "Peacebuilding in the Aftermath of Conflict" (United Nations, 2012), emphasized the significance of prioritizing inclusion at an early stage in peacebuilding endeavors, calling upon the international community to identify opportunities and entry points for incorporating inclusive approaches in these efforts. Therefore, the mission included several key aspects of peacebuilding <sup>1</sup>. In fact, it was the first UN peacekeeping mission with an explicit mandate to mainstream UNSCR 1325 (Wamai, 2011). The intervention of the United Nations, as well as the provisions of the CPA of the establishment of the National Transitional Government of Liberia, led to the 2005 elections where Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected as Liberia's (and Africa's) first female president. In a Transcript, of the challenges of post-war reconstruction, Sirleaf stated that "our most immediate challenge was peace and security" (Rehn & Sirleaf, 2002).

---

<sup>1</sup> These include: contributing to international efforts to protect and promote human rights; security sector reform, including the training of civilian police and the formation of a new and restructured military.

## **Chapter 3 - Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

This chapter contains the literature review on women's participation in peacebuilding and the theoretical framework.

### **3.1 Theoretical Concepts**

#### **3.1.1 Peace**

In order to understand the concept of women in peacebuilding, it is essential to define the meaning of peace. According to Galtung (1976), peace can be distinguished into positive and negative peace. Negative peace describes the absence of violence and war. Barsa, et. al (2016), claim that ceasefires are merely a product of negative peace. Long-lasting peace can be achieved not only the absence of war, but by identifying the threats to a new conflict is absent as well, known as positive peace. In post-conflict environment, while women and men both experience the war, they are facing different atrocities and violence during the war itself. Ochen (2017) argues women bear the burden of these differences, challenging their safety also in the post-conflict setting. The development of the country falls under the positive peace spectrum, as discussed in the theoretical framework. According to Vision of Humanity's Positive Peace Index (Positive Peace Institute, 2021), is Liberia's average ranking (2009-2020) 126<sup>th</sup> out of the 163 countries assessed in the PPI.

#### **3.1.2 Peacebuilding**

The term peacebuilding entered the international discourse in the 1990s (Garnett, 2021) and has since gained multiple understandings due to the many stakeholders that have popularized the term. Importantly, peacebuilding must be differentiated from peacemaking and peacekeeping<sup>2</sup>. Galtung defines peacebuilding as "the process of creating self-supporting structures that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where wars might occur" (Galtung, 1976) with the main purpose of to prevent a relapse into violent conflict. According to Reychler (2001), peacebuilding are initiatives indented to fix the core problems that underlie conflicts and change the patterns of interaction of the involved parties. Such a situation involves the absence

---

<sup>2</sup> Peacemaking" generally refers to the signing of agreements between policymakers, which results in a suspension of fighting. "peacekeeping" often occurs during these interludes: peacekeeping refers to the deployment of international personnel to maintain peace and security.

of physical and structural violence. In this paper, ‘peacebuilders’ are considered any actor that is working to achieve these goals: including governments, NGOs, CSOs and individuals. This is an important classification because peacebuilding occurs in different spheres.

### **3.1.2.1 Women in Peacebuilding**

The UNSC (2020) annual report on Women, Peace and Security affirms that women’s groups have demonstrated that they are essential leaders in emergencies and play a key role in maintaining social cohesion and preventing further conflict and instability. Moran and Pitcher have aptly argued that an agency-based approach draws attention to less visible forces crucial in peace building – such as women’s organizations in Liberia and elsewhere – and that one needs to look beyond the arena of visible leaders and the institutional framework to understand peacebuilding. Demonstrated in World Bank publication *Breaking the Conflict Trap* (Collier et al., 2003), strengthening women’s political and social participation diminishes the chances of conflict relapse after a war has ended. The research operates under the theory that women’s participation in civic spaces builds social cohesion. In contrast to previous methods that primarily relied on leadership from elites, typically male-dominated, current interventions in conflict-affected societies prioritize expanding the involvement of grassroots movements and include as many women as possible, aiming to promote gender equality and pursue sustainable solutions (De Almagro & Bargués-Pedreny, 2022).

Women in peacebuilding consist of formal and informal activities. While formal processes include early warning, preventive diplomacy, conflict prevention, reconciliation, etc., informal practices include protests, inter-group dialogue, promotion of interethnic tolerance and the empowerment of citizens (Smyth, et.al, 2020). Garnett (2021) argues that although informal peacebuilding is paramount to the peacebuilding-agenda, these informal activates often go unrecognized.

### **3.1.3 Women Empowerment**

Women’s empowerment means women gaining more power and control over their own lives. Gender role expectations are institutionalized through legislative, educational, political, and economic systems. Women need to be empowered in order



to slender the gender gap and to create an equal playing field between women and men before gender equality can be reached and maintained <sup>3</sup>. Gender equality is a stronger predictor of a state's peacefulness than its level of democracy, religion, or gross domestic product. Where women are more empowered, the state is less likely to experience civil conflict or go to war with its neighbors (Mechoulan, 2016). Empowerment is especially needed in societies with patriarchal structures, as it assumes an imbalance of power between women and men. In Africa, patriarchal cultures are often cited as the main reason for under-representation of women in peacebuilding (Garba, 2016). In this research, the scope of women empowerment is narrowed down to its political empowerment and the women's understanding of its role in civic spaces. The notion of empowerment is closely related to the patriarchal structures that exist in Liberia. These societal structures are founded upon a system that grants legitimacy to male dominance over women, manifested through various forms of suppression, neglect, and violence (Nilsson, 2019).

### **3.1.4 Civic and Political Participation**

In this research, civic and political participation entail the channels through which women contribute to peace. Van Deth (2014) broadly defines political participation as citizens' activities affecting politics. Political participation also overlaps and is interconnected with civic participation, which is "how an active citizen participates in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future" (Adler & Goggin, 2005, p. 241). Civic participation on the other hand is connected to the term of 'civic spaces', which relies on both the formal and the informal channels through which individuals and groups can play a role in policymaking and contribute to decision-making, political and peacebuilding processes (United Nations, 2020). Alscher, et.al. (2017, p.6) argues that civil society involves of structured and unstructured groups, separate from the state, working for non-profit interests. In this sense, NGOs have the ability to operate more flexible than state actors as well as they can provide access to a wider range of peacebuilding efforts that are considered non-military options, such as "psycho-social care; retraining of ex-

---

<sup>3</sup> Empowerment is not to be seen as a zero-sum game where gains for women automatically imply losses for men.

combatants; awareness-raising; encouraging trust-building between conflicting parties and lobbying for peace” (Fuest, 2010).

Furthermore, Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called NGOs “the conscience of humanity.” To truly become this conscience, the voices of women’s organizations must be heard and heeded by governance structures in which they are fully and consistently represented (Rehn & Sirleaf, 2002). Garnett (2021) further argues that women organizations play a critical role in bridging the gap across communities and networks; this includes bridging the gap between grassroots organizers and international organizations. The African Journal of Conflict Resolution (ACCORD, 2016) acknowledges that women’s organizations have contributed to the development of several peacebuilding-related policies and strategies and have mobilized grassroots support and participation for the implementation of peacebuilding efforts. International peacebuilding initiatives sometimes lack the understanding of the local realities and social context, adding to existing tensions (Garnett, 2021).

## Chapter 4 - Methodology

This section outlines the methodology employed for the research focused on examining the peacebuilding efforts of women's organizations in post-conflict Liberia (2007-2023), and their contributions to empowering women in civic and political spaces.

The first step to answer this question was made by identifying relevant women's organizations in Liberia. The organizations chosen for this research were made on the understanding retrieved from relevant literature on the post-conflict environment, as well as my own understanding from the time I spent in the country and the data I analyzed as an intern. The scope is therefore narrowed to Liberian Women's Organizations. These include Angie Brooks (ABIC), Impact Girls, YWCA, Liberia National Rural Women, Bong County Women. Furthermore, the International NGO, ZOA which is cooperating tightly with national CSOs, is also a part of the data analysis as the organization contributes within the field of women empowerment in civic and political spaces, and as I gained insight from the organizations from the activities I carried out during my internship in Liberia.

From these organizations arise peacebuilding initiatives and projects. The monitoring efforts that have been made before, during and after the projects have been essential for the understanding of the success and complication of the project activities. Particularly, the project "Sustainable and inclusive peace in Liberia through promoting women's leadership and participation in civic and political life and their strengthened role in conflict resolution"<sup>4</sup> (hereby, the Sustainable and Inclusive Peace Project) been used as a key component of data sampling. The report is written for donors and is therefore not included in the appendices. It provides useful data on how cultural violence can be influenced by the changing of norms and values regarding women in political participation and their role as active agents in peacebuilding with enhanced political power.

Although I have not conducted interviews myself, I have contributed to the monitoring and evaluation of some of the projects, as well as conducting data analysis

---

<sup>4</sup> The project is implemented by ZOA Liberia in cooperation with The Angie Brooks International Centre (ABIC) for Women's Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security, with funding from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund in the period 2020 to 2022.

on the impact of the mechanisms of Appreciative Inquiry and the Women's Situation Room during my internship in Liberia Monitors the fall of 2022. This research presents qualitative data, but it is based on quantitative research done through this period of time, which can be found in some of the reports investigated. Furthermore, a booklet! Women oh Women! Have been used to conduct stories from the women participating in the project.

Logically, not all women's organizations are analyzed within this research. Yet, the women's organizations and the methods used by them, are hoped to represent a general point of view of the effect of women's participation in Liberia. This thesis focuses particularly on the implementation of adequate measures in relations to elections, but also specific projects containing the Women's Situation Room and Appreciative Inquiry. Understandingly, other peacebuilding mechanisms such as VSLA, Entrepreneurship, GBV, Community Based Sociotherapy, etc., enhance positive peace in the country as well, however, this research is narrowed down only to these key aspects of women in peacebuilding.

Other limitations lie in the data themselves. Potential biases may exist in the data collected from project reports and focus group discussions. Moreover, the generalizability of the findings may be constrained to the specific context of post-conflict Liberia. Furthermore, the indexes, reports and other relevant statistics gathered second hand, have also stated their limitations. The World Bank Group (2023), for instance, stated that the monitoring mechanisms and data represented in the Poverty & Equity Briefs are a result of "weak institutional capacity and absence of historical data".

## Chapter 5 – Research Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the research and provide valuable insights into the strategies, initiatives, and challenges faced by women’s organizations in their pursuit of gender equality and inclusive governance.

### 5.1 Awakened Resilience - Paving the Way for Women’s Participation

When looking at the impact women’s organizations in Liberia have made on the empowerment of women and their civic and political participation, it is important to explore the surge of agency among women in Liberia in the post-conflict period.

Firstly, Liberian women as peacemakers paved the way for Liberian women as peacebuilders. Women’s organizations efforts included a wide array of tactics in ending the conflict. Appealing to the feeling of *what* it is to be a woman, seems to have contributed the most to the enhancement of collective action. The women stressed their roles as mothers, sisters, and daughters, and even arranged a national sex-strike to the warring factions, and their own husbands. These mechanisms, rooted in the sense of being female, set an example of the potential for women organizations to engender empowerment and bottom-up civil society mobilization (Garnett, 2021).

The proliferation of women’s agency is also indicative of the women’s experience of violence during the war. Unfortunately, women became victims of widespread sexual and gender-based violence. With this, the women gradually emerged from their conventional roles assuming more proactive peacebuilding responsibilities as individuals and organizational groupings. Alongside the challenging post-conflict environment, the UNSCR 1325 have contributed to the mobilization of women in peacebuilding, giving the women the increased confidence and sense of purpose. Furthermore, the 2003 CPA contains, in contrast to many other peace agreements, some gender-relevant, if typically unspecific, policies. It states that women should be included in the Governance Reform Commission and that members of the National Transitional Legislative Assembly should come *inter alia* from women organizations. However, it did not specify women’s participation in political structures.

Another reason that contributed to higher female collective effort was the election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. 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. 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 Ellen Johnson Sirleaf won both rounds as president-elect. An estimation of 48.5% of the voters in the 2011 election were women that voted for her in the belief that female leadership was necessary for sustainable peace. Compared to other women's peace movements on the African continent, the Liberian case appears to have generated a perhaps unusual level of collective female peace activism.

## **5.2 Challenges to Civic and Political Participation**

While the last section described the willingness of women to participate in peacebuilding efforts in the civic and political space, this section highlights the obstacles that hinders the ideas to become implemented reality. Mobilizing women into the political arena have been a challenge for women's organizations in Liberia. The 2001 Country Report of Liberia in the *Third United Nations Conference On The Least Developed Countries* presented by the Government of Liberia, stated that by 2010 women should have been fully integrated or mainstreamed at all levels, and the issue of gender will only be used to refer to male or female. As of this day, that is not the case.

While the civil conflict created openings for social transformation in Liberia, women's entry into the public sphere, remains difficult due to the patriarchal nature of Liberian society. 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. Women's participation and political representation are still contingent upon their adherence to the essentialist paradigm that restricts them to being seen primarily as wives, mothers, and caretakers. Within political parties, there is a prevalence of masculinity, posing a challenge to the efforts to sustain a gender-inclusive political environment.

Theobald (2012) states that Liberia saw a surge in women's political representation compared to the pre-war era and that much of this can be connected to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's presidency. However, after her presidency came to an end, so did the increasing number of female ministers. Today, only 9% of the seats in the

parliament are held by women (United Nations Development Programme, 2022). Unfortunately, local politics and positions are appointed, and often given to men.

Secondly, although Gender Based Violence (GBV) became an underlying motivation for women to fight back against injustice, at the same time, it constituted, and constitutes still a big obstacle for women to enter political life. Caprioli (2005) argues that countries in which women are excluded from social, political, and economic structures tend to reproduce insecurities, thus making sustainable peace difficult to achieve. This is evident in post-conflict Liberia. In 2018, 26.9% of women aged 15-49 years reported that they had been subject to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months (United Nations Women, n.d.). Amidst a surge in rape cases across the country in September 2020, President Weah made a declaration of a national emergency regarding rape. He pledged to implement several measures to combat this issue, including the formation of a national security task force specifically dedicated to addressing sexual and gender-based violence. Unfortunately, despite poor monitoring mechanisms, the trend suggests that the numbers are increasing during electoral periods. According to the National Democratic Institute (n.d.), the 2017 presidential elections were paired with GBV in the shape of physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, threats and coercion, and economic violence. Also, most violent crimes are settled by local traditional leaders or remain unresolved. In this sense, women are excluded from the political process in the most evident manner, physically, but the burden also threaten their psychological security.

### **5.3 The Scope of Action of Women's Organizations in Liberia**

Women's organizations have implemented several initiatives to make the political environment more inclusive, even with the barriers presented. NGOs took an impressive turn after the war, and in 2009, more than 400 NGOs had registered with the Ministry of Planning (Fuest, 2010). Amidst the conflict, a coalition of ten women's organizations united to establish the National Women's Commission of Liberia (NAWOCOL). NAWOCOL was an NGO specifically created to offer leadership and an organizational structure to facilitate coordination and networking among various women's groups (UN, n.d.). Women's groups often act in partnership, or with technical assistance from international actors (Kellow, 2010). However, the nature of international support has limited its intended impact and, in some cases, served to undermine the unity of civil society.

#### **5.3.1 Bridging the Gap**

One of the main tasks of women's organizations in Liberia has been in bridging the gap across communities and different stakeholders. As a part of the reconciliation phase of the post-conflict period, the Women in Peacebuilding Network and the UN Women implemented the Palava Peace Hut Project, a "safe space for women to express themselves on issues related to reconciliation and peacebuilding" (Connolly & Minicieli, 2019). In this manner, the organization helped women access justice, and engage in protest actions, often in marginalized communities to which the UN did not have access. Furthermore, its presence on peace including several actors from several levels of society through community mobilization. Civil Society Organizations have gained trust in a post-conflict society where the state is still rebuilding itself. In 2016, the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index found that civil society in Liberia were trusted more than state organs.

The Women's Peace Network in Liberia has implemented a notable project by establishing 19 "peace huts" in rural areas across the country. The primary goal of these peace huts is to encourage women's active participation in community decision-making processes and strengthen their capacity in peacebuilding efforts. This initiative specifically addresses the customary exclusion of women's voices in discussions held in traditional "palava huts," which serve as spaces for resolving community disputes.



Additionally, the project aims to identify suitable female candidates who can represent their communities in future elections.

### **5.3.2 Elections**

Based on the violence that society, and particularly women, face during elections, there are several ways in which organizations can contribute to a peaceful electoral process. Since the 1990s, electoral monitoring and observation have emerged as widely used interventions, serving a crucial role in promoting accountability and diminishing the likelihood of impunity (Drumond, 2015). While the Liberian National Elections Commission (NEC) is the official institution mandated to conduct national elections for all elective public positions, as Liberia is still structurally transitioning its society, the accountability that is needed for a successful election is still lagging. For instance, The LERN platform managed by Liberia's Peacebuilding Office and that falls under the African Union's Early Warning and Early Response (EWER) framework, should, in principle work as an enabler for civil society to upload information about security issues that represent a potential threat to regional or national stability. However, the platform is currently not operational due to a lack of financing. Consequently, the operational challenges undermine transparency and identification of electoral threats in the period before elections. Hence, other actors have emerged to ensure this.

Civil society organizations also play an important role in monitoring the elections and mitigating violence where necessary (Kruiper & Berg, 2023). Before the inaugural post-conflict elections in 2005, women's civil society organizations, aided by international support, spearheaded a comprehensive campaign to raise awareness about the significance of women's participation in all aspects of the electoral process. As part of this initiative, a nationwide voter registration drive was organized, which successfully attracted a significant number of women who had previously not exercised their right to vote. The campaign also provided encouragement and support to more than 100 female candidates, including two running for the presidency and four for the vice-presidency. Women actively engaged in monitoring the elections, contributing to the creation of an environment conducive to increased women's participation (Kellow, 2010). In the 2017 elections, women's organizations also took the role as observers.

Women's organizations have also tried to push for a quota that will ensure women's representation in politics. However, the organizations have little legal capacity in implementing gender inclusive policies. Notwithstanding that even authorities have been able to come together to bring about a quota of female representatives in government. Since 2005, there have been six failed attempts to include affirmative action/quotas in the electoral framework. The United Nations recognizes 30% of female representation in political decision-making positions as the minimum level to achieve "critical mass" (Kellow, 2010). The quota exists in Liberia but is not mandatory. Interestingly enough though, the report "Public Perceptions of Elections & Women political Participation in Liberia" published by the National Elections Commission of Liberia (2023) reveals that the knowledge of the New Election Law is relatively low, where three out of every five respondents noted to not have any knowledge on the New Elections Law of 2014. With this, it can be argued that representative inequity is not yet a securitized issue for the ones with true decision-making powers and that the political will to *de facto* implement the statute seem to be lacking in Liberia. This is also highlighted in the country report represented in May 2001, stating "The problem though seems to be the lack of political will to follow through or completely implement the programs". As the theoretical framework laid out is cooperation between different stakeholders in society crucial for sustainable peace but if the general will does not allow for women to take part, the job becomes more difficult. Mahmoud Koroma, UN Women Liberia Programme Manager on Governance and Women's Political Participation warned in 2017 that "While all but four of the major political parties have signed an agreement to ensure that they would have at least 30% women candidates on their lists, we cannot take it for granted that parties will comply" (United Nations Women, 2017). For the upcoming election, the preoccupation remains the same. This year, several actors from the civil society sector came together for a stakeholder discussion to make a plan of action to ensure that the bill is actualized before the 2023 elections, coordinated by Medica Liberia and POWER Liberia, two women's rights CSOs (Liberian Observer, 2023).

## **Chapter 6 - Strategies on Empowering Women in Civic and Political Spaces**

Looking within this scope, two strategies have been chosen as base of the research to get an understanding on how women can be empowered in civil and political spaces in post-conflict Liberia (1) Appreciative Inquiry (AI), and (2) The Women's Situation Room (WSR). When analyzing women's contribution in every stage of the political process, that also accounts for electoral processes. Importantly, this research covers the extent to which women's role can promote sustainable peace. Accordingly, the understanding of effectiveness of the mechanisms will be based on the evaluation of women's enhanced participation leading to a more peaceful society.

### **6.1 Women's Situation Room**

One peacebuilding initiative that explicitly involves women leadership and the prevention of electoral violence, is the Women's Situation Room (WSR). The WSR can be defined as "a women-led non-partisan political process, aiming to promote peaceful and transparent elections, prevent electoral violence, and increase democratic participation" (Drumond, 2015). The initial introduction of the concept came in Liberia's 2011 elections from Yvette Chesson-Wureh, who serves as the coordinator for the Angie Brooks International Centre (ABIC), a non-governmental organization in Liberia dedicated to women's empowerment (ACCORD, 2017).

As discussed in the previous chapter, is monitoring a frequent tool implemented by women's organizations to safeguard the integrity of the electoral process. More recently, there has been recognition of the need to supplement electoral monitoring with more proactive conflict prevention strategies. Key activities include voter education, peer-to-peer peace advocacy, engagement with the media, creation of structures of dialogue among stakeholders, and direct engagement with vulnerable populations. The situation room is staffed by distinguished women leaders (so called eminent women) who have been chosen for their significant influence and credibility within their respective communities. These women's groups, including the Eminent Women, play an active role in responding to and mediating conflicts among political actors. They effectively manage the expectations and grievances of losing candidates by fostering mutual understanding, trust, and inclusive dialogue. Through their

grassroots activities, these women's groups work towards promoting coexistence and peace within their communities, thereby reducing the potential mobilization of political constituencies.

During the 2011 election, a significant effort was made to empower women's participation. With support from the UNDP and in collaboration with the ABIC a total of 419 women from 17 political parties underwent training to actively engage in the electoral process. Women representing various political parties collectively advocated for support and recognition of their activities. This advocacy was a result of an interparty dialogue held in 2010, which aimed to amplify the role of women within political parties and empower female candidates to run in the 2011 elections. In addition to these initiatives, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided support to 95 women's organizations with the goal of enhancing their involvement in voter registration. This support from the UNDP played a crucial role in increasing the participation of women in the electoral process and promoting their representation in the political sphere (ACCORD, 2017).

In Liberia, the WSR has been successful to operate under the umbrella of positive peace. The civil component of the organizations allows them to address the root causes to conflict based on the specific context in the communities or project audience that they target. The method specifically focusses on empowering women to become leaders. Within the Sustainable and Inclusive Peace Project, the women's group selected 30 women to become Women Mediators. These women would complete the training and get certified on the WSR mechanism and Track II methodologies. After the project ended, 97% of the participants acknowledged that women play a key role in conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence. All Eminent Women also acknowledge that the project helped in increasing female representation in civic, political, and mediation positions. This does, nevertheless, mean that women are not subject to exclusionary practices from men. A question to further ask, is whether women are in need of a safe environment to "practice", before stepping directly into the public sphere.

In January 2012, only a couple of months after being established for the first time, the Gender is my Agenda Campaign at the African Union adopted the WSR as a 'best practice' and asked for its replication in other African electoral processes (UN Women, n.d.). Furthermore, the UN Security Council in 2016 endorsed the WSR, emphasizing that it has "...helped to prevent or mitigate the eruption and escalation of

violence, inter alia through observing and monitoring, and engaging stakeholders in constructive dialogue and peace advocacy” (United Nations, 2016). In fact, it can be argued that it has generated a spill-over effect in the West-African region. Countries such as Kenya, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Senegal, and Ghana have all implemented their own versions of the WSR (ACCORD, 2017). Due to the possibility of local adaption of the method, the countries have been able to adapt it to their specific contexts and needs.

## 6.2 Appreciative Inquiry

Another approach bringing about positive change is the Appreciative Inquiry (AI) method. The AI methodology embraces a multi-level, positive approach that incorporates existing grassroots women's groups. It aims to enhance capacity building, facilitate dialogue, and advocate with local authorities and traditional leaders to establish more inclusive and accountable decision-making processes.

In detail, Appreciative Inquiry is based on the following 4D principles (See figure 2).

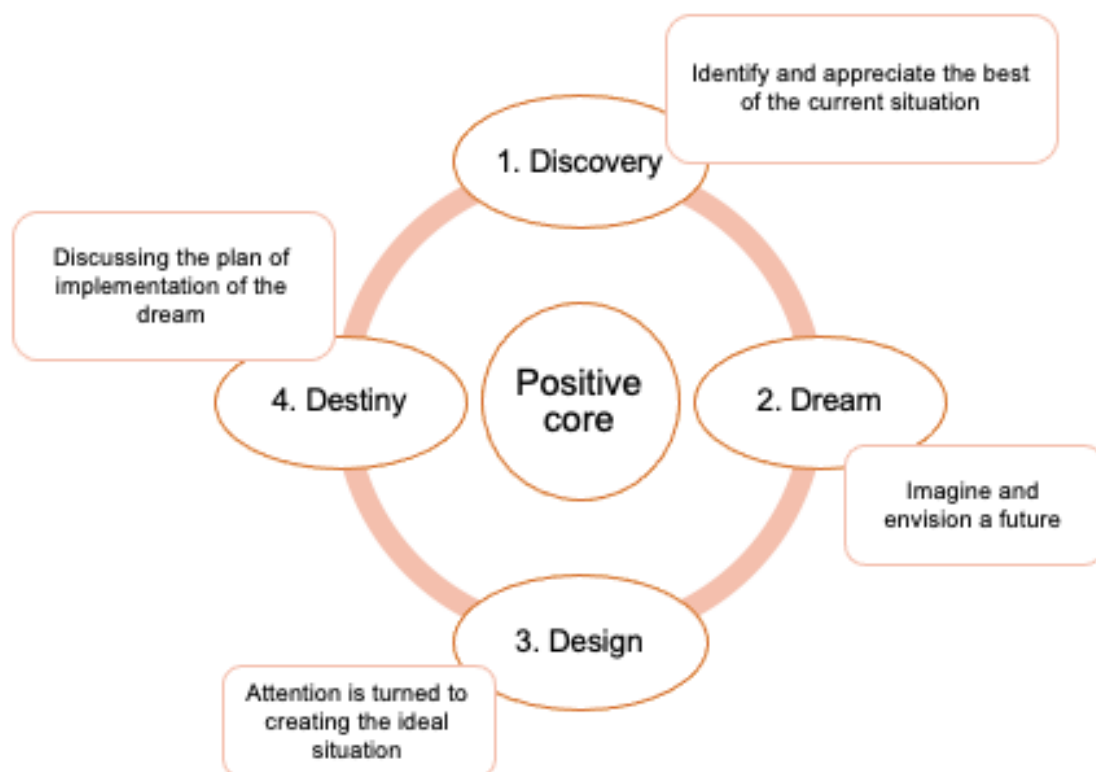


Figure 2. The 4 D's of the Appreciative Inquiry

Discovery: The first step, Discovery, involves identifying and appreciating the existing strengths, positive experiences, and successful practices within the organization or community. It focuses on exploring what is working well and what people value. This step typically includes conducting interviews, surveys, or other data collection methods to gather stories and examples of positive experiences. The aim is to create a foundation of understanding and appreciation for the organization's best attributes and successes.

Dream: In the Dream phase, participants engage in envisioning and collectively imagining a future that builds upon the strengths and possibilities identified in the Discovery phase. This step involves creating a shared vision of what the organization or community aspires to become. Participants are encouraged to think creatively and explore new possibilities, setting aside limitations and constraints. The focus is on designing a compelling and inspiring vision that energizes and motivates everyone involved.

Design: The Design phase involves developing concrete plans and strategies to bring the envisioned future into reality. Participants work together to identify specific actions, projects, and initiatives that will help manifest the desired future. This step emphasizes collaboration, innovation, and co-creation, as individuals and groups contribute their expertise and insights to shape the design. The goal is to create practical and actionable plans that align with the shared vision and leverage the strengths and resources of the organization or community.

Destiny (or Delivery): The final step, Destiny or Delivery, centers around implementing and sustaining the designed initiatives. It involves putting the plans into action, monitoring progress, and adapting as needed. This step emphasizes continuous learning, feedback, and improvement. Participants actively engage in carrying out the planned activities, celebrating successes, and learning from challenges. The focus is on creating a culture of ongoing improvement and embedding the positive changes into the fabric of the organization or community.

The approach prioritizes cultural sensitivity, iterative processes, and exploratory methods to empower participants and foster their active ownership of the discussions. Through this inclusive approach, participants engage in comprehensive analysis to identify the underlying causes of gender inequality in decision-making, as well as in political and civic life. The method has two potential outcomes: (1) Men and

society at large see women as peacebuilders, and: (2) women themselves see themselves as competent to participate in political life.

The method, in general, is very holistic. In the Sustainable and Inclusive Peace Project, 20 key public actors received sessions to explore negative gender norms and perceptions. The research revealed the difficulties of projecting non-quantitative results, such as the aspect of changing norms and behavior or other non-directly and non-immediate outcomes. However, labeling key actors either as ‘drivers’ or ‘blockers’<sup>5</sup> have helped on proving the tangible outcomes of the project. Interviews conducted before the project revealed the opinions of the blockers. For instance, did one blocker state “a woman’s role should be limited to family work and emphasized that women should be submissive and obedient to their husbands”. After, that same man appointed a female Assistant Town Chief and promised to appoint additional women for other positions as long as they are confident to step out for leadership positions. In the end, all of the blockers identified changed their perceptions on women in leadership, stating for instance

*“In Suakoko, district women have never served in any key position but with the push of the agenda to the Superintendent we have a woman as paramount chief. It is easy for female to penetrate any area as compared to men. Therefore, for we are pushing for this representation”. (ZOA, 2023)*

The project managed in the end to get 39 women appointed into leadership positions. Notably, women gain positions such as secretaries or assistant town chiefs, and it’s still hard for them to achieve positions of higher ranking.

Furthermore, both methods locally adapt. In the Sustainable and Inclusive Peace Project, not only did key stakeholders interact within the meetings, but in the Appreciative Inquiry sessions four civil society organizations were involved in the implementation: YWCA, Liberia National Rural Women Structure, Impact Girls, and Bong County Women Organization, all with relevant experiences in women empowerment. Representatives from the organizations stated after that it was the local context that gave the women their power. Furthermore, local CSOs have the advantage of being close to the project beneficiaries and to be persistent with

---

<sup>5</sup> Blockers are influential actors who are unsupportive of women participations, while drivers are the most suitable actors for promoting women participation.

continually engage with women in sessions and answer inquiries directly. As one stakeholder put it in the KI interview: “persistence kills resistance”.

From the Women Oh Women leaflet, it demonstrated that apart from the quantitative, or visible consequences of the initiatives, such as increased leadership or higher voter turnout, the project displayed that women’s empowerment also in the private space led to a more tolerant society towards women, leading to boosted empowerment in contributing to civic activities. In this sense, women are bolstered in the informal aspects of decision-making, being mediators, advocates, etc. “Having the buy-in of men, both at the community level and at the household level, is important to facilitate the empowerment and participation of women” (ZOA report). In this sense, the preventative efforts ensure that violence does not happen in the first instance, and, consequently, is not translated into political processes. Also, representatives from YCWA stated in the stakeholder interview in the post-project phase, that the sessions translated into the private sphere in their worklife:

*“In the office, it also helped within the office and the community. Louisa is now appointed to a secretary of something. A woman is now the chairperson in the parent teacher association. You appreciate yourself, and confidence came out from it”. (ZOA, 2023)*

The findings indicate that the involvement of male counterparts in the AI sessions was identified as a significant factor contributing to the success of the initiative. As outlined in the theoretical framework, the participation of women in politics is impeded by prevailing gender norms. Despite the emergence of "new roles for women" in Liberia, it remains uncertain whether patriarchal norms were eradicated by the war. There is a question as to whether women were expected to remain silent and occupy subordinate positions due to cultural norms. In certain instances, women's leadership was even forbidden due to cultural restrictions that completely prohibited their involvement in decision-making and holding leadership positions.

The Appreciative Inquiry meetings have also enabled several women to gain the understanding of themselves being enablers of a peaceful society by contributing in the political sphere. Kpontoe D. Rennie, continued to emphasize that in the sense of female leadership in reproductive health concerns



*"A man will advocate for what benefits him. But a woman understands what pregnancy and delivery are like, and she will make plans for maternity centers. But now, we are in power, and we are free. I changed, and the town changed too». (ZOA, 2023)*

A critical aspect to the results lies in the relatively small scale of the project. However, The Women Oh Women! Leaflet demonstrates that small numbers also have a saying:

*“The men cannot decide on everything anymore. If something is important for us, and we are with 16 women, we can make it happen” (ZOA, 2023)*

From a monitoring mentality, 16 people might seem like an insignificant number, but if these women recognize that only 16 women is necessary to include women in society, then the intervention at least has a small-scale impact. On an individual level it has significant meaning, and if individual empowerment, as suggested by the theoretical framework is necessary to sustainable peace, then 16 women changes the perception of *at least* one man.

Lastly, the results are based on only two counties. As the stakeholder interview with the PBF coordinator highlighted “What I can say is that this intervention needs to be replicated in other counties. Bong and Montserrado create good examples, but it should be a roll-over effect to other communities”.

Evidently, post-conflict societies are dynamic ones. Looking at Liberia’s progress in terms of the project analyzed, there is room to believe that women’s contribution in the political sphere has developed society towards a more peace-resilient one. Currently, Liberia has gained a feminist status in the region. President’s Weah’s speech at the 2022 United Nations General Assembly 77<sup>th</sup> session, emphasizes this, where he prided himself as Liberia’s ‘Feminist-in-Chief’, explicitly mentioning that women empowerment and the promotion of gender equality remain key priorities of the Government. As CSOs and Women’s organizations operate in the sphere of the Government’s influence, a public commitment to gender equality is an enabler for further action for women’s organizations.

## **Chapter 7 - Conclusion**

In conclusion, women's organizations have marked their territory in Liberia's post-conflict era. Visibly, the country has not experienced violence at the characteristically intense levels they did during the heights of their conflicts during the 1990s. However, as this thesis have outlined, violence comes in several understandings, with inequalities being a core trigger to all of them. As the understanding of women's role in peacebuilding remains relatively new, the approach of women's organizations of continuously "learning by doing" will affect the potential of efficiently building peace. However, empowering women and achieving gender equality is a time-consuming affair. Therefore, as the topic continues to be underdeveloped and national women's organizations operate with limited resources, the operational options also serve as limited.

It is a truism that changing norms and cultural violence is hard to measure. Yet, by following the theories of women as contributors to positive peace, this research demonstrates that not only have female representatives in civic and political spaces increased in post-conflict Liberia but so has the societal understanding of the importance of it. The Liberian case demonstrated that women's organizations serve as enablers to this process as they involve relevant stakeholders to the process. The organizations have the opportunity to locally adapt the projects to ground level, increasing the understanding of the local population's understanding and needs of a peaceful society.

Lastly, it is hoped that with increasing attention on women's contribution to the political sphere as an inherent part of sustainable peace, that the future for Liberia will be an inclusive one. To achieve a feminist vision for peace, the WPS agenda must take an intersectional approach to ensure that the needs and concerns of distinct and vulnerable groups are adequately taken into account at all levels. Thanks to enhanced monitoring and data-gathering mechanisms, there might be potential in enhancing women's participation. Furthermore, regional and member states of the AU must ensure increase financial support for women's rights organizations to take leadership and provide expertise and guidance at all stages of peacebuilding and humanitarian response.

## Chapter 8 - Bibliography

- ACCORD. (2016, March 3). *Integrating Peacebuilding within Policy Frameworks in Post-conflict Settings – ACCORD*. <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/integrating-peacebuilding-within-policy-frameworks-in-post-conflict-settings/>
- ACCORD. (2017, March 13). *The Women's Situation Room in Africa – ACCORD*. <https://www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/womens-situation-room-africa/>
- Adler, R. P. & Goggin, J. (2005). What Do We Mean By “Civic Engagement”? *Journal of Transformative Education*, 3(3), 236-253.
- Alscher, M., Priller, E., Ratka, S., & Graf Strachwitz, R. (2017). *The space for Civil Society: Shrinking? Growing? Changing?* Berlin: Maecenata Institute
- Barsa, M., Holt-Ivry, O., Muehlenbeck, A., Case, K., Easthom, T., O'Reilly, M., & Federer, J. P. (2016). Inclusive Ceasefires: Women, gender, and a sustainable end to violence. *Inclusive Security*.
- Caprioli, M. (2005). Primed for violence: The role of gender inequality in predicting internal conflict. *International studies quarterly*, 49(2), 161-178.
- Collier, P., Elliott, V. L., Hegre, H., Hoeffler, A., Reynal-Querol, M., & Sambanis, N. (2003). Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy [Dataset]. In *PsycEXTRA Dataset*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/e504012013-001>
- Connolly, L., & Mincieli, L. (2019). *Sustaining Peace in Liberia: New Reforms, New Opportunities?* International Peace Institute.
- De Almagro, M. M., & Bargués-Pedreny, P. (2022). A feminist opening of resilience: Elizabeth Grosz, Liberian Peace Huts and IR critiques. *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 25(4), 967–992. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41268-022-00264-0>
- Drumond, P. (2015). Promoting Democracy in Preventing Electoral Violence: The Women's Situation Room. *Sustainable Development Solutions Network: A Global Initiative for the United Nations*. [unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/150601-SDSN-Issue-Brief-WSR-1.pdf](https://www.unsdsn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/150601-SDSN-Issue-Brief-WSR-1.pdf). Accessed, 28.
- Eriksson, E. (2016). *Women's Empowerment and its Links to Sustainable Development*, EPRS: *European Parliamentary Research Service*. Belgium.

- Retrieved from <https://policycommons.net/artifacts/1334046/womens-empowerment-and-its-links-to-sustainable-development/1939157/> on May 31, 2023. CID: 20.500.12592/f55n13.
- Fuest, V. (2010). Contested Inclusions: Pitfalls of NGO Peace-Building Activities in Liberia. *Africa Spectrum*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000203971004500201>
- Galtung, J. (1976). Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding. In C. Elders (Ed.), *Peace, War and Defense: Essays in Peace Research II* (pp. 282-304). Copenhagen: Christian Elders.
- Galvanek, J., & Suah Shilue, J. (2021). Working Tirelessly for Peace and Equality: Civil Resistance and Peacebuilding in Liberia. In *International Center on Nonviolent Conflict*. ICNC Press. Retrieved February 9, 2023, from <https://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Working-Tirelessly-for-Peace-and-Equality-Liberia-SR.pdf>
- Garba, G. K. (2016). Building women's capacity for peace building in Nigeria.
- Garnett, T. A. (2016). "Ellen Is Our Man". *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 18(1), 99-118.
- Garnett, T. A. (2021). Women and Peacebuilding in Postconflict African States. In *The Palgrave Handbook of African Women's Studie* (1st ed., pp. 653–667). Palgrave Macmillan Cham.
- Kellow, T. (2010). Women, elections and violence in West Africa: Assessing women's political participation in Liberia and Sierra Leone. *London: International Alert*.
- Kruiper, T., & Berg, V. (2023). Electoral violence, women, and peacebuilding in Liberia: towards the 2023 elections.
- Kuperman, A. J. (2015). Liberia: How Diplomacy Helped End a 13-Year Civil War. *Negotiating in Times of Conflict*, 155-71.
- Liberia Chronology of Events : Security Council Report*. (2018, May 2). Security Council Report. Retrieved February 9, 2023, from <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/chronology/liberia.php>
- Liberian Observer. (2023, March 17). Liberia: Concerned CSOs Worried About Status of 30% Gender Quota Bill. *Liberian Observer*. <https://www.liberianobserver.com/liberia-concerned-csos-worried-about-status-30-gender-quota-bill>

- McCarthy, M. K. (2011). Women's Participation in Peacebuilding: A Missing Piece of the Puzzle?
- Mechoulan, D. (2016). SDGs and Prevention for Sustaining Peace: Exploring the Transformative Potential of the Goal on Gender Equality.
- National Democratic Institute. (n.d.). *Votes Without Violence: A Citizen Observer's Guide to Addressing Violence Against Women in Elections*.  
<https://www.ndi.org/votes-without-violence-guide>
- Nilsson, M. (2019). *The challenge of unlearning: A study of gender norms and masculinities in Liberia*. Swedish Embassy. Retrieved May 6, 2023, from <https://genderjustice.org.za/publication/the-challenge-of-unlearning/>
- Ochen, E. (2017). Women and liberal peacebuilding in postconflict Uganda: Community social work agenda revisited? *African Sociological Review*, 21(2), 15–35.
- OECD. (2008). Gender and Sustainable Development : MAXIMISING THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ROLE OF WOMEN. In *OECD*. <https://www.oecd.org/social/40881538.pdf>
- OECD. (2016). The Sustainable Development Goals: An overview of relevant OECD analysis, tools and approaches. In *OECD*. Retrieved May 17, 2023, from <https://www.oecd.org/dac/The%20Sustainable%20Development%20Goals%200An%20overview%20of%20relevant%20OECD%20analysis.pdf>
- Ouellet, J. X. (2013). Women and Religion in Liberia's Peace and Reconciliation. *Critical Intersections in Education*, 1(1), 12-20.
- Positive Peace Institute. (2021). Positive Peace Index. Vision of Humanity. Retrieved from <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/positive-peace-index/#/>
- Radelet, S. (2007). Reviving economic growth in Liberia. *Available at SSRN 1101496*.
- Rehn, E., & Sirleaf, E. J. (2002). Women, war and peace. *New York: UNIFEM*, 207-219.

- Reychler, L. (2001). From conflict to sustainable peacebuilding: Concepts and analytical tools. *Reychler/Paffenholz*, 3-15.
- Smyth, F., Hersi, A., Baldoumus, A., Tonelli, A., Khezi-Nwoha, H., Bhagwan-Rolls, S., ... &
- Theobald, A. (2012). *The Role of Women in Making and Building Peace in Liberia: Gender Sensitivity Versus Masculinity*. ibidem Press
- Third International Conference on Financing for Development*. (n.d.). United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Retrieved May 6, 2023, from <https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/ffd3/news/investing-in-gender-equality-vital-to-economic-growth-sustainable-development-says-ban.html>
- Tolu Afolabi, B. (2018). The Liberian Civil War: Interests, actors & interventions. In *The Politics of Peacemaking in Africa* (1st ed., pp. 73–99). Cambridge University Press.
- United Nations (2003). Human Development Index. United Nations Development Programme.
- United Nations. (2016, June 15). *Security Council Presidential Statement Reaffirms Link between Women’s Involvement in Conflict Prevention Efforts, Calls for Increased Participation* | UN Press. <https://press.un.org/en/2016/sc12403.doc.htm>
- United Nations. (2020). United Nations Guidance Note: Protection and Promotion of Civic Space. In *OHCHR*. Retrieved May 21, 2023, from [https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/CivicSpace/UN\\_Guidance\\_Note.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/CivicSpace/UN_Guidance_Note.pdf)
- United Nations Development Programme [UNDP]. (2022, September 8). *Specific country data*. Human Development Reports. Retrieved May 31, 2023, from <https://hdr.undp.org/data-center/specific-country-data#/countries/LBR>
- United Nations Women. (n.d.). *Country Fact Sheet* | *UN Women Data Hub*. UN Women. Retrieved May 30, 2023, from <https://data.unwomen.org/country/liberia>
- United Nations Women. (2017, August 7). *Liberia elections: Making 2017 count for women*. UN Women – Headquarters. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/8/feature-liberia-elections-2017>

Van Deth, J. W. (2014). A conceptual map of political participation. *Acta Politica*, 49, 349–367.

Wamai Njoki. (2011) UNSCR 1325 Implementation in Liberia: Dilemmas and Challenges. In: Olonisakin Funmi, Barnes Karen, Ikpe Eka., editors. *Women, Peace and Security: Translating Policy into Practice*. London: Routledge; 2011. pp. 52–65.

Women and peace and security : Report of the Secretary-General. (2020). In *United Nations Security Council*. Retrieved March 3, 2023, from [https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s\\_2020\\_946.pdf](https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2020_946.pdf)

World Bank Group. (2023). Poverty & Equity Brief: Liberia. In *World Bank Group*. Retrieved May 20, 2023, from [https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext\\_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global\\_POVEQ\\_LBR.pdf](https://databankfiles.worldbank.org/public/ddpext_download/poverty/987B9C90-CB9F-4D93-AE8C-750588BF00QA/current/Global_POVEQ_LBR.pdf)