

Gender assessment of the policy environment in relation to the cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber value chains in Liberia



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Acronyms

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AfT	Agenda for Transformation
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANL	Alien and Nationality Law
CAAS	Comprehensive Assessment of the Agriculture System
CDA	Cooperative Development Agency
CFR	Council on Foreign Relations
CITES	<i>Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species</i>
ccGAP	Climate Change Gender Action Plan
CoC	Chain of Custody
CRC	Cavalla Rubber Corporation
CRL	Community Rights Law
CWC	Child Welfare Committee
DEL	Decedent Estate Law
DRL	Domestic Relation Law
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ERCM	Equal Right of Customary Marriage
EU	European Union
FBO	Farmers Based Organisation
FCI	Foundation for Community Initiatives
FDA	Forestry Development Agency
FFS	Farmer Field School
FMC	Forest Management Contract
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GoL	Government of Liberia
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICBT	Informal Cross-Border Trade
LAC	Liberia Agricultural Company

LACRA	Liberia Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority
LASIP	Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Program
LEITI	Liberian Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative
LLA	Liberia Land Authority
LPMC	Liberia Produce Marketing Cooperation
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MARCO	Morris American Rubber Corporation
MoGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection
MRU	Mano River Union
NAP	National Action Plan
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NDC	National Determined Contribution
NFRL	National Forestry Reform Law
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGP	National Gender Policy
NHSWPP	National Health and Social Welfare Policy and Plan
PAPD	Pro-Poor Agenda for Development and Prosperity
PHL	Public Health Law
PoA	Plan of Action
RSPO	Roundtable For Sustainable Palm Oil
RSS	Ribbed Smoked Sheet
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDI	Sustainable Development Institute
SRC	Salala Rubber Corporation
SSG	Société Générale de Surveillance
STAR-P	Smallholder Agriculture Transformation and Revitalisation Project
TSC	Timber Sale Contract
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNCRC	United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

UNECA United Nation Economic Commission for Africa

UNSCR United Nation Security Council Resolution

VPA Voluntary Partnership Agreement

Executive Summary

The agriculture sector, including community value chains such as cocoa, oil palm, rubber and the forestry sector (especially timber value chain), contribute significantly to economic growth and development in Liberia. These sectors will face many challenges in the coming years as the land suitable for cultivation continues to decline, due to the large areas of land which have been appropriated by concessions, deforestation, land conflicts, and climate change, amongst others. The ability to cope with these challenges in the midst of rapidly rising demands for cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber products by consumers will require the inclusion of everyone – men, women and youth - along the value chains in order to avoid destruction of forests. According to the International Finance Corporation (IFC) (2019)¹, one of the main solutions to coping with these challenges in a sustainable manner is to improve women's access to assets, including land, to enable them to fully participate in all aspects of agriculture and forestry value chains. Women should also have equal access to and control of land and other related natural resources.

This report presents a gender assessment of the policy environment in relation to the cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber value chains in Liberia, with particular focus on how women's rights, roles, opportunities and responsibilities are treated equally to men along those value chains. Cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber are very important to the country in terms of employment and revenue generation. They also take up huge forest areas and threaten deforestation and livelihoods of local communities. Approximately 465,000 ha of land in Liberia have been granted to concessions for oil palm plantation, with an estimated 35,000 ha of oil palm worked by smallholders; and approximately 178,200 ha are allocated to natural rubber.

The assessment revealed that Liberia has made significant progress in enacting many policies and strategies, including the National Gender Policy, that are attempting to address gender inequality issues, especially women's rights and inclusion in all sectors of the economy, including the cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber value chains. Ways to progress gender equality and women's empowerment are addressed in most of the policies and strategies.

However, the many policies, regulations and strategies that have been developed are not properly synchronised and consolidated. Thus, implementation remains a challenge across government ministries and agencies, the private sector, and civil society organisations, and the objectives of mainstreaming and promoting gender equality and women's rights in these value chains are not being achieved.

It was also observed that most of the policies, regulations and strategies were developed without a thorough gender assessment or mapping and analysis of each of the major value chains – cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber - with specific reference to the productive roles that men and women play along these value chains. Therefore, the roles that women play along these strategic value chains are not clearly understood and appreciated, especially the need to create a level playing field for women's access to the resources and services they need to become more efficient and competitive.

The assessment showed that different gender equality issues, especially women and youth activities, are often grouped together and considered as cross-cutting issues in national policies and strategies [e.g. Agenda for Transformation (Aft), Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD), and Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Program (LASIP)]. Grouping women and youth activities together under cross-cutting issues leads to women's issues being glossed over in major programmes and being underfunded.

¹ IFC (2019). Case Study: Strengthening Women Farmers in Dcm Shriram's Sugarcane Value Chain

1. Aims of the Assessment

This assessment is aimed at understanding the gender-responsiveness of the various policies and initiatives related to sustainable production of cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber and their supply chains in Liberia. It is intended to provide insights regarding the policies of cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber supply chains and how these policies promote gender inclusion and equality, and reveal gaps that exist in making the policies gender sensitive. It provides recommendations to promote gender equality along these important agricultural and forestry supply chains. In addition, the assessment provides better insights on how existing policies and laws could be used by government and private sector actors to support the advancement of gender equality within cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber production areas.

2. Methodology

This assignment applied a qualitative approach – desk review - to assess the policy environment in relation to the cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber supply chains in Liberia. The desk study reviewed existing policies, strategies and reports and some lessons learned in addressing gender equality issues. Several Key Informants with expertise and experience regarding gender, land and agricultural value chains in Liberia were selected and interviewed to include their perspectives on the gender-sensitivity of the policies related to the selected agricultural value chains and timber. The names of the key informants consulted are listed in Annex 1.

A stakeholders' validation workshop was also held to present and discuss the draft Gender Assessment Report. A total of 23 knowledgeable individuals drawn from government ministries and agencies, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, bilateral organisations and the private sector participated in the validation workshop. Annex 2 contains the list of participants.

3. Overview of the Context of Agriculture and Women's Rights in Liberia

Agriculture is the primary livelihood for about 70% of Liberia's 5.07 million population of which 2.55 million (50.3%) are male and 2.5 million (49.7%) are female². The sector provides sustenance for many households engaged in staple food production (rice and cassava) and cash crops such as rubber, oil palm and cocoa mainly for foreign exchange. Agricultural productivity is low and lacks basic facilities such as irrigation, machines, farming equipment/tools, farm-to-market roads, fertilisers and pesticides, and food storage capacity. These factors underpin Liberia's importation of more than 80% of its staple (rice) thus, making the country more vulnerable to global food price volatility³. There are huge market opportunities and potential for agribusiness investments which focus on developing the value chains of the available food crops such as rice, cassava, vegetables, fruits, poultry and fish. In terms of the fisheries sub-sector, Liberia has an Atlantic coastline spanning about 580 kilometers endowed with abundant marine fish stocks and other marine species including crab, lobster, shrimp, tuna, and barracuda. There are also huge opportunities for aquaculture for inland fisheries for growing tilapia and catfish for both domestic and international markets.

Liberia has the largest existing Upper Guinea forest of West Africa. Liberia's forest represents about 42 percent of the Upper Guinea forest area, which is an important hotspot of global biodiversity⁴. According

² <https://countrymetersw.info>

³ <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Liberia-Agricultural-Sectors>

⁴ USAID (Nov. 2010). Landlinks: Liberia.

to a 2018 World Bank reports, out of the total forest area of approximately 6.6 million hectares (with canopy cover over 30%), almost 28% is designated for commercial timber production (under Forest Management Contracts [FMCs] and Timber Sale Contracts [TSCs]), 18% is under existing and proposed Protected Areas (PAs), 5% is under palm oil concessions, and 1% is under rubber plantation. The non-designated category is about 45% of the forest area which is used in a variety of ways by communities, smallholder cultivators, and transitory populations. Most Liberian households, both in urban and rural areas, depend on the forest for different uses, including firewood and charcoal for cooking, hunting, and timber for building and furniture. Therefore, forests play an important role as a safety net for vulnerable and marginalised people, especially women. The current expanding and unsustainable production of agricultural and forestry products, especially cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber lead to deforestation that affect the population in the affected communities. This requires responsive policies to protect and support women's role in sustainable production of various agricultural and forest products supply chains.

Relative to the major agricultural value chains in Liberia, natural rubber is one of the dominant generators of state revenues, accounting for 17.5% of the total export receipts in 2017. An estimated 30,000 people are employed by commercial rubber farms and up to 60,000 smallholder households are involved in growing rubber trees^{6,7}. It is estimated that about 55% of rubber is produced by smallholder farmers (15.2% of whom are female-headed), while the remaining 45% is produced by concessions and used to supply Technically Specified Rubber (TSR) for production of tyres. Rubber has huge unexploited market for various rubber products including rubber wood, Ribbed Smoked Sheets (RSS), crepe, chairs, pipes, bushels, gloves and other household appliances. Liberia has a favourable climate and fertile soil for cocoa production and there is increased investment in the rehabilitation of cooperative and smallholder farms in the country. Hundreds of small and medium scale farms around the country are involved in the cultivation of cocoa, mostly in Lofa, Bong, Nimba and Grand Gedeh Counties. Although cocoa production is on a small scale, it is expected to increase as farmers continue to reclaim and rehabilitate their farms. As with the agriculture sector in general, smallholder cocoa farmers and local cooperatives are challenged by the lack of improved planting materials, inadequate farm-to-market roads, lack of familiarity with measurement and quality standards, lack of storage facilities, and limited access to updated price and market information⁸. Oil palm has traditionally been produced for the domestic market and home consumption. There has been considerable interest from both smallholders and large investors in expanding oil palm production and export⁹. However, land tenure/right has been a major challenge to current and potential investors in the sector as local communities whose livelihoods depend on land raise their voices regarding land grabbing by the concessionaires.

For smallholders in all the major agricultural value chains and timber described above, the primary challenge is the lack of proper understanding and appreciation for women's rights and gender equality issues along each of these value chains; women and men have different roles and responsibilities in the different stages of the value chains. The division of labour implies that there is specific knowledge along these value chains that is held by women and by men based on their existing roles. In Liberia's subsistence staple food production, women plant the rice after men have cleared the land, which is more labour intensive. Thereafter, women harvest and manage the rice by processing, preparing food for the household and marketing. According to the Liberia PROSPER Gender Assessment¹⁰, women also invest a

⁵ World Bank (2018). Report No: 126565 Liberia: Country Forest Note.

⁶ <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Liberia-Agricultural-Sectors>

⁷ Disaggregated data in terms of the sex breakdown of these estimates were not available. However gender division of labour in cash crops in Liberia is 61% for men and 39% for women (see footnote #13).

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ USAID/Development & Training Services, Inc. (DTS) (2012). Liberia people, rules, and organizations supporting the protection of ecosystem resources (PROSPER) gender assessment.

greater share of their time, knowledge and money in their children and are believed to better manage the household resources than their male counterparts. In addition, women are burdened with domestic activities such as laundry and caring for the children, which reduces the time they have available for productive work and they are disadvantaged in accessing agricultural inputs and gaining access to land and its resources. Therefore, women's rights and gender equality issues require the enactment and implementation of gender-sensitive policies and strategies that promote gender inclusion and equality for long-term sustainable management of these important agricultural and forestry value chains.

Gender issues in Liberia, especially the rights of women, are deeply rooted in existing long-standing power imbalances in traditional practices, inadequacies in statutory laws, and a failure by society to enforce policies and laws that are meant to protect women (Kaba, 2013)¹¹. Traditionally, women and girls are restricted to domestic roles such as housekeeping, cooking and caring for children and elders while men, on the other hand, are assigned the roles of economic power, providing for and leading their families. These traditional biases and practices tend to influence how gender policies and strategies are designed and implemented across almost all sectors of the country thus depriving women of development opportunities and empowerment. Women play significant roles and responsibilities along the various agricultural value chains, including planting, harvesting, processing and marketing which need to be addressed to ensure sustainable production and productivity. According to the FAO 2010-2011 State of the Food Report¹², and the 2007 Gender Assessment Report by the World Bank in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Development¹³, there is a large body of empirical evidence from many different countries that show that female farmers have less access to land, fewer inputs and essential services to carry out their productive function, so they produce less. Women also lack access to training and to larger credit lines which limits the ability of women to graduate to the formal sector in urban areas. Women also are severely disadvantaged in their access to formal labour markets by their lag in educational attainment. Despite their important economic role, women have limited access to the inputs and services essential to carry out their productive functions; this situation hinders their productivity and ability to contribute to the economy. This lack of access is notable in agricultural production, where most rural women are employed and limits their economic opportunities in rural areas.

¹¹ <http://www.focusonland.com/for-comment/protecting-womens-rights-in-liberia/>

¹² <http://www.fao.org/3/i2050e/i2050e01.pdf>

¹³ World Bank's Gender and Development Group (PRMGE) in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Development of Liberia (2007). Liberia Gender-Aware Programs and Women's Roles in Agricultural Value Chains: A Policy Memorandum.

4. Existing Policies, Laws, Strategies and Sensitivity to Gender Equality in Cocoa, Oil Palm, Rubber, and Timber Value Chains

4.1. National Gender Policy

The Government of Liberia and development partners have long recognised gender equality as an important development strategy. The 1986 Constitution of the Republic of Liberia clearly recognises under Chapter III, Article 11 to 26 the fundamental rights of all Liberians regardless of race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, religion, creed or gender. The Liberian Constitution also prohibits discriminations based on gender and recognises the multiplier effect across the development of other sectors. By an Act of the National Legislature in 2001, the Government established the Ministry of Gender and Development with the mandate to advise Government on all matters affecting the development and welfare of women and children. In 2009, the Ministry of Gender and Development (MoGD) issued the National Gender Policy (NGP – 2010-2020). The 2009 NGP was revised and validated in 2017 for the period 2018-2022. The NGP is aimed at (i) promoting gender-equitable socioeconomic development; (ii) enhancing women's and girls' empowerment; (iii) increasing gender mainstreaming in national development; and (iv) creating and strengthening structures, processes and mechanisms in which women participate equally and that ensure that women and men can equally access, control, and benefit from the country's resources¹⁴.

As a requirement under CEDAW which was ratified by Liberia, the Government established the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) in 2015 to Amend Chapter 38 of the Ministry of Gender and Development. The MoGCSP has the responsibility to advise the government about the development and welfare of women and children, ensuring technical gender policy analysis, gender mainstreaming, and training in gender-responsive planning, budgeting and monitoring. The MoGDSP has a specific division on gender equality and women's empowerment.

4.1.1. Gender Assessment of the National Gender Policy

A National Gender Policy (NGP) exists in Liberia and cuts across all aspects of national development, including the selected commodity value chains (cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber). The NGP calls for mainstreaming gender issues in all sectors and development activities in Liberia. The major challenge is how to mainstream the elements of the NGP in each of the major sectors of the country and to develop clear monitoring indicators for measuring for full implementation of the policy. These challenges are focused on, but not limited to, high teenage pregnancy rates, negative impact of mining activities especially on boys, weak society implementation of the NGP and limited focus on boys and young men. Moreover, the Pro-poor Agenda for Transformation makes no reference to the NGP and there is a lack of budgetary allocation for implementation and monitoring of the NGP.

4.2. National Social Protection Policy and Strategy

Poverty and vulnerability are widespread in Liberia. The Government enacted the National Social Protection Policy and Strategy in 2013¹⁵ that complements the National Gender Policy. It provides a national framework and direction for providing social protection for the most vulnerable groups, particularly children, women, people with disabilities and the elderly. The strategy is geared towards strengthening institutions that deliver social protection services and forging sustained partnerships between the Government ministries and agencies, parastatals, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, the private sector, and development partners.

¹⁴ <http://agaliprogram.org/eng/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/Policy-Brief-Gender-Policy-Liberia.pdf>

¹⁵ Government of Liberia (2013). "National" Social" Protection "Strategy.

4.2.1. Gender Assessment of the Social Protection Policy

While the goals of the Liberia Social Protection Policy are aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the action plan for implementation of the policy has to dive deeper into monitoring, evaluating and documenting progress on addressing gender issues associated with social protection programming and lessons learned from implementation of the policy. The policy was established to define the medium to long-term priorities of social protection and to establish an inclusive social protection system that brings the poorest and most vulnerable households into the development corridor. It is also intended to support the needs of the poorest households and the most vulnerable groups throughout the lifecycle and provide guidance for ensuring coordination and monitoring of social protection programmes. Although social protection is a critical component of the Human Development Pillar of the national development strategy alongside Health, Education, and Water and Sanitation it has been neglected in terms of annual Government of Liberia budgetary allocations. It should cut across other sectors to support the achievement of wider development objectives.

4.3. Child Labour Policy

Child labour is prevalent in Liberia. It is estimated that 78.4% of school age children aged 5-14 in Liberia work in the agricultural sector and perform dangerous tasks in the production of rubber, cocoa, coffee, cassava and production of charcoal¹⁶. It is generally believed in Liberia that girls are more likely than boys to suffer child labour, however disaggregated data by sex was not available when this assessment was carried out. Child labour in Liberia, especially for girls, is the result of multiple reasons emanating primarily from economic vulnerabilities of households amidst high unemployment and low wages by employers (both in the public and private sectors). Children work long hours in the households and plantations, and this obviously jeopardises their rights to education and opportunities for lifelong prosperity. From a human rights perspective, child labour is an infringement of the rights of children, both boys and girls. According to UNICEF (https://www.unicef.org/sowc07/docs/sowc07_panel_3_3.pdf), girl children often start working at an earlier age than boys especially in the rural areas where most working children are found. The girls also do more work in the home than boys. However, more boys than girls in total are involved in child labour.

The Government of Liberia has a number of policy frameworks that address child labour, including:

Decent Work Bill of 2015 and the National Commission on Child Labour (NACOMAL), head by the Ministry of Labour (MOL) that is charged with monitoring child labour issues and directing child labour policies;

Children Protection Unit of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP); and

Women and Children Protection Section (WCPS) of Ministry of Justice and the Liberia National Police.

Since the passage of the Decent Work Bill in 2015, the government has established a comprehensive policy framework favourable to the elimination of child labour and participation in illicit activities. The law explicitly promotes fundamental rights at work, including the right not to be subject to forced or compulsory labour; the right to equality at work, and to equal working conditions regardless of sex; and the right not to be subject to the worst forms of child labour.

4.3.1. Gender Assessment of the Child Labour Policy

Although Liberia has policy and institutional frameworks to protect against child labour, they are not providing actual protection for children. The policy frameworks further lack clearly defined indicators for monitoring and evaluating the extent to which the policies protect girls and boys from household-related

¹⁶ Lawyers without Borders (2018). Liberia Child Labor Manual and Rapid Reference Cards. https://www.winrock.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Liberia_RRCs_Manual_Dec_2018_LWOB-compressed.pdf

or other forced labour practices, especially on plantations and concessions. Besides, regular, timely and accurate data are not collected or published regarding the status of child labour in the country.

4.4. Land Rights Act 2018 and Women's Land Rights

The rights to land for various uses, especially for the agriculture and forestry sectors, is one of the major challenges of Liberia. Land tenure is believed to have been one of the root causes of Liberia's bloody civil war¹⁷. Rights to land is more challenging for women in rural areas. Fortunately, the "Land Rights Act" was ratified on August 23, 2018 by the Liberia National Legislature and signed into law by President George Weah on September 19, 2018. The Act was developed based on consultations with a cross-section of stakeholders, including women and youth. The Land Rights Act is believed to be one of the most progressive land rights laws in Africa and is the first law that recognises women's rights to land¹⁸. The Act includes many clear gender-sensitive elements, including the following:

- i. All community members, including women, youth, and members of minority groups have equally strong ownership claims to customary lands, and have equal rights to use and manage community land. (Articles 2 and 34.3);
- ii. The community itself is responsible for the management of their customary lands and is tasked with: drafting bylaws on how they will govern their land; elect diverse leadership; make a land use plan that ensures sustainable use and conservation and is based on customary practices. (Articles 35.1, 36.1, 36.2 and 38.1); and
- iii. The community's land governance body must be composed equally of men, women and youth and must make decisions by consensus. (Articles 36.4, 36.6, 36.7 and 36.8).

4.4.1. Gender Assessment of the Lands Right Act

There is no doubt that gender equality issues are addressed in the 2018 Land Rights Act. The Article 2, and 34.3 of the Land Right Acts states that all community members including women, youth members of minority groups have equally strong ownerships and claims to customary land and have equal right to use and manage community land. Moreover, Article 36.4, 36.6, 36.7 and 36.8 state that the community land governance body must be composed equally of men, women and youth and must make decisions by consensus. However, there is still the challenge of instituting the implementation strategies to ensure that women benefit equally from access to and control of land. If the Land Rights Act will protect women, the passage should not be an end in itself. It is equally important that advocates and key stakeholders track implementation of the Act carefully to ensure that land benefits can be equally shared between men and women.

Secondly, the Liberia Land Authority (LLA) is developing the implementation strategies of the new Land Rights Act. The strategies need to be clear on women's rights to land. Relative to transforming Tribal Certificates to deeds, men have been the primary signatories to these certificates. If not tracked, the process of transferring tribal certificates to deeds could result in excluding women by-and-large from private ownership in rural Liberia because tribal certificates appear to cover much of the land held within customary communities. In this case the risk to women is that most of the land area of customary land will be transferred into permanent private ownership largely by men tribal certificate holders.

Thirdly, concessions are expected to adhere to national gender policies and other related policies and strategies, but government's monitoring system for ensuring that these policies are implemented is very

¹⁷ Sawyer, Amos (2nd March 2009). Land Governance Challenges: The Case of Liberia. A PowerPoint prepared for ARD Week presentation at the World Bank, Washington, D.C. USA.

¹⁸ Kai, Loretta Alethea Popo (2019). Land is power: How land rights can enfranchise Liberia's women. <http://news.trust.org/item/20190308094008-tbfoc/>

weak.

4.5. Climate Change Policy

Liberians are affected by climate change and vulnerable groups are specifically disadvantaged. To mitigate the effects of climate change requires equal involvement of everyone. According to the former Minister of Gender and Development Julia Duncan Cassell, “[...] development of a gender sensitive climate change strategy [...] will lead to the women of Liberia taking ownership and deciding what they want as it relates to climate change.”¹⁹ The Liberia Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed and adopted the National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) in 2008 aimed at reducing vulnerability and build adaptive capacity by mainstreaming adaptation into all sector-specific and national development planning, including agriculture, fisheries, forestry, health, water and sanitation, and energy. The cross-sectoral themes identified as critical in this policy and strategy document are communication, education, and awareness, capacity building and training, research and development, technology transfer, gender, HIV and AIDS. In 2010 the EPA developed and adopted a National Adaptation Plan (NAP) to, among other things:

- I. Take a medium- and long-term approach to reducing vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change in Liberia; and
- II. Facilitate the integration of climate change adaptation, in a coherent manner within all relevant sectors and at different levels, as appropriate²⁰.

The EPA has also developed and adopted the Liberia Climate Change Gender Action Plan (ccGAP). The plan falls within the broader framework of NAPA. The overall objective of Liberia’s ccGAP is to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed into climate change policies, programmes, and interventions. The priority areas identified in the plan are agriculture, fisheries, forestry, health, water and sanitation, and energy. The main objective of ccGAP is to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed into Liberia’s climate change policies, programmes and interventions so that both men and women have equal opportunities to implement and benefit from mitigation and adaptation initiatives in combating climate change and positively impact on the outcome of “Liberia Rising 2030.”²¹ The targeted sectors included under mitigation are forestry and wildlife, agriculture, energy, mining, industry, transport, tourism, and waste management.

4.5.1. Gender Assessment of the Climate Change Policy

Liberia’s climate change policy is generally gender sensitive. The policy clearly states in its objectives that “climate change will hit women harder than men because of existing vulnerabilities and gender inequalities”. It also recognises that although climate change affects all, the impact and degree of vulnerability is different for men and women with women being more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than men - primarily as they constitute the majority of the poor and are more dependent on natural resources for their livelihood. Thus, as part of its implementation strategies, the Climate Change Gender Action Plan (ccGAP) has been developed. Although the NAPA has fully integrated gender issues in its implementation framework and has developed the ccGAP, there is need for tracking progress on gender participation and inclusion in climate change programmes and activities to ensure that

¹⁹ https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2012_IUCN_Climate-Change-Gender-Action-Plan-Liberia_Fact-Sheet.pdf

²⁰ UNDP (2015). Liberia’s National Adaptation Plan Process Stocktaking report and preliminary road map for advancing Liberia’s NAP process. https://www.adaptation-undp.org/sites/default/files/downloads/liberia_stocktaking_report_for_nap_and_road-map_for_cambodia_nap_gsp_and_giz_21_0.pdf

²¹ https://www.climatelinks.org/sites/default/files/asset/document/2012_IUCN_Climate-Change-Gender-Action-Plan-Liberia_Fact-Sheet.pdf

implementation of gender mainstreaming activities, especially focused on women, are not glossed over.

4.6. Cocoa Policy and Strategy

Cocoa is one of the strategic crops of Liberia. The Government of Liberia developed the National Cocoa Export Strategy 2014-2018 with the following vision: "To become an agent of transformation in the cocoa sector, driving large scale sustainable job creation and augmenting access to economic empowerment opportunities for small entrepreneurs through increased exports"²². There are several elements of structural adjustments in the cocoa strategy that include:

- i. Increased strategic partnerships with regional and global cocoa institutions
- ii. Increased availability and adoption of input supplies (i.e. short-duration high yielding varieties, fertilisers, pesticides, scales, etc.)
- iii. Adoption of improved sustainable land management practices; improved sorting at the farm-gate level
- iv. Strengthening the regulatory capacity of the Liberia Agricultural Commodities Regulatory Authority (LACRA)
- v. Increased integration of women in activities across the value chain; and
- vi. Improvements in logistical infrastructure such as warehouses.

4.6.1. Gender Assessment of the Cocoa Policy and Strategy

The cocoa strategy acknowledges the need to mainstream gender equality issues in the cocoa sub-sector across the entire value chain. However, the challenge is how to ensure that the major players in the cocoa sector will implement gender inclusiveness to overcome the status quo. According to a gender assessment conducted by Solidaridad West Africa²³ on the cocoa sector in Ghana, huge gender inequality (especially against women) exists in the sector. The study revealed that an estimated 75 percent of the tasks in cocoa cultivation are performed by women, but the significant contributions of women along the cocoa value chain are not recognised and duly rewarded. Numerous interventions implemented to promote cocoa sustainability are gender blind. As a result, they fail to fully address the challenges faced by women in the cocoa sector in Ghana. These findings are not unique to Ghana; they are also applicable to the cocoa sector in Liberia. Therefore, there is the need for cocoa policies and strategies in Liberia to clearly address the issues of promoting gender inclusion and equality.

4.7. Oil Palm Policy and Strategy

Oil Palm is one of the most important food and industrial crops in Liberia. The demand for palm oil has grown steadily and demand for oil palm products will continue to rise, especially in emerging markets both in Africa and other international markets. Oil palm is gradually becoming Liberia's main export product. The oil palm sector employs nearly 220,000 employees. It is estimated that 29,080 households are involved in production in the sector, of which 23,860 households (82%) are male-headed and the remaining 5,220 households (18%) are female-headed²⁴. The 2018 agreement that granted several land concessions to palm oil producers such as Equatorial Oil Palm, Sime Darby and Golden Veroleum, means

²² Republic of Liberia (2014). National Cocoa Export Strategy 2014-2018.

²³ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/solidaridad-calls-cocoa-interventions-address-gender-west-africa>

²⁴ Government of Liberia & International Trade Centre (2014). The Republic Of Liberia National Export Strategy Oil Palm Sector Export Strategy 2014-2018

that the expansion of oil palm plantations is remarkable in Liberia²⁵. However, many environmental experts and activists (such as Alfred Brownell, winner of the 2019 Goldman Prize for the Environment, and environmental institutions such as the Sustainable Development Institute [SDI]) hold the view that expansion of oil palm production is causing huge deforestation of community forests, and contributing to the displacement of farmers (especially women), without offering them viable alternative livelihoods. According to Afrik21, the most sustainable way forward is to encourage increased oil palm productivity without expansion in the forests²⁶.

Due to the importance of oil palm for national growth and development, the Government of Liberia developed a National Oil Palm Export Strategy (2014-2018) aimed at enhancing the productive capacity in the oil palm sector, particularly at the smallholder level through the outgrowers' scheme. The strategy proposes the establishment of an integrated research programme and to augment the availability of quality skilled and semi-skilled labour to improve business services and extension services support. Integral to capacity enhancement is the improvement of data collection capabilities to allow better policymaking and to substantially increase the level of organisation in the sector. The strategy further aims to promote the diversification of products and capacity by improving processing and packaging capability and to support and promulgate the use of mills.²⁷

4.7.1. Gender Assessment of the Oil Palm Strategy

An important issue that needs to be addressed by the oil palm strategy relates to gender equity and inclusion – the roles and responsibilities that men, women and youth play in every aspect of the oil palm value chain. Both men and women play critical roles in the oil palm value chain. However, women contribute more to processing and marketing while men do the harvest at the smallholder level. One of the strategies for achieving the objectives of the Oil Palm Export Strategy is to ensure that the outgrower schemes allocate land to women. The strategy should address appropriate land rights and utilisation mechanisms to reduce land conflicts between concessionaires and local communities that cut across gender as men, women and youth aspire to protect their land. It should also clearly highlight gender-sensitive indicators that specifically address women's activities along the oil palm value chain.

4.8. Rubber Policy and Strategies

Natural rubber is a major cash crop in Liberia and is one of the dominant generators of state revenues, accounting for 17.5% of the total export receipts in 2017. An estimated 30,000 people are employed by commercial rubber farms and up to 60,000 smallholder households are involved in growing rubber trees²⁸. About 48,290 households are involved in production in the rubber sector, of which 41,800 households (84.8%) are male-headed and the remaining 7,490 households (15.2%) are female-headed²⁹. The sector is dominated by the Firestone Rubber Plantation Company that introduced large scale in production in Liberia in 1926. Natural rubber was sporadic and limited to a few areas along the coast until 1926 when the Liberian Government and Firestone entered into a 99-year land lease agreement for one million acres at a price of US\$6 cents per acre. Liberia has experienced the emergence of several large rubber companies over the last several decades - Liberia Agricultural Company (LAC) (1959), Salala Rubber Corporation (SRC) (1959), Morris American Rubber Corporation (MARCO) (2007) and Cavalla Rubber Corporation (CRC) (2011).

²⁵ <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/solidaridad-calls-cocoa-interventions-address-gender-west-africa>

²⁶ <https://www.afrik21.africa/en/liberia-sustainable-palm-oil-production-programme-launched/>

²⁷ Republic of Liberia (2014). National Oil Palm Export Strategy 2014-2018.

²⁸ <https://www.export.gov/article?id=Liberia-Agricultural-Sectors>

²⁹ Government of Liberia & International Trade Centre (2014). The Republic Of Liberia National Export Strategy Oil Palm Sector Export Strategy 2014-2018

Unlike cocoa and oil palm, however, there seems to be no defined policy framework for natural rubber which has been the largest export crop since 1926. Policy for natural rubber is largely embedded in concession agreements with large producers, including Firestone, SRC, LAC, MARCO and Cavala. Agriculture related policy documents such as the Agenda for Transformation (AFT) and Liberia Agriculture Sector Improvement Project (LASIP) and the Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD) consider rubber a major strategic cash crop for employment and revenue generation.

4.8.1. Gender Assessment of Rubber Policy and Strategy

Women and youth constitute a significantly proportion of the labour force on the rubber plantations and private rubber farms across the country. They provide labour for clearing, planting, crop maintenance as well as harvest to some extent. The policy framework for natural rubber is embedded in the concession agreements with large producers which do not clearly address gender issues. Generally, gender equality issues in the rubber sector are based the labour laws of Liberia such as the Decent Work Bill, National Social Protection Policy, and other policies for gender inclusion. Concessions are expected to adhere to Liberia gender policies. However, there are no clear indicators to be used as yardsticks for monitoring gender inclusiveness and empowerment in the rubber sector.

4.9. Forestry Policies and Community Rights Law

Policies and legal framework efforts to manage and regulate the forestry sector in Liberia began in the 1950s, with emphasis mainly on identification of national parks, and reserves as protected areas to manage commercial logging activities. The Forestry Development Authority (FDA) was established in 1976 by an Act of the National Legislature as a state-owned enterprise with a broad mandate to conduct research, provide training, and devote all publicly owned forest lands to their most productive use for the permanent good of the people, considering their direct and indirect values³⁰. Forestry was a thriving sector until the outbreak of the Liberian civil war in 1989 which disrupted the sector until the end of the civil war in 2003. In 2004, Liberia initiated a forestry sector reform process, which included a review of all existing logging concession claims. The reform process led to the 2006 National Forestry Reform Law, and the Community Rights Law of 2009. Under the framework of these two statutes, a variety of different permits and concessions types were developed, which are dependent on the ownership and type of land, and the resources to be extracted³¹.

The 2009 Community Rights Law with respect to forest lands was meant to engage and empower communities in the sustainable management of the forests by creating a legal framework that defines and supports community rights in the management and use of forest resources. This has given rural communities the right to control the lawful use, protection, management and development of their forest resources. In addition, communities may negotiate and enter into small-scale and commercial contracts for harvesting timber and non-timber forest products on their forest lands using social contracts. Local communities have the rights to at least 55% of all revenues/income generated from large-scale commercial contracts between communities, the FDA, and third parties for harvesting timbers on their community forest land³².

4.9.1. Gender Assessment of the Forestry and Community Rights Law

The policies, laws and regulations on forestry, including community Rights Law, include statements on

³⁰ World Bank (2018). Report No: 126565 Liberia: Country Forest Note

³¹ Ibid

³² <http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/lbr143892.pdf>

gender equity and inclusion. However, an in-depth assessment by Julie Weah (2012)³³ of the forestry policies, especially the Community Rights Law, revealed that while there are provisions that note the special situation of women and the need for their involvement in forest governance and management, the policies do not treat the participation of women as a right, especially in community decision-making structures. The assessment noted that the provisions for participation of women are not strong enough to ensure the equal representation of women in important forest management decisions.

4.10. Timber Policies and Regulations

Generally, the timber policies and regulations are tied to the existing forest policies and laws and the community rights law. The major government policy that regulates timber (logging) is the Liberian Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (LEITI) Act of 2009. The Act mandates LEITI to collect information along the extractive industry value chains, including timber, from the point of extraction, to how the revenue makes its way through the government, and to how it contributes to the economy including employment. However, to avoid illegal timber (logging) and ensure sustainable management of the forest and its products, timber policies are also subjected to implementation of a number of international treaties that the Liberian Government has affixed its signature to, including the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) with the European Union (EU) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) – both wild fauna and flora. These international treaties set out legal frameworks to ensure that timber supply chains are monitored, that forests are managed sustainably and that local communities have a say in the decisions affecting their lives. The EU and UK allotted funds to Liberia for the VPA's implementation³⁴.

4.10.1. Gender Assessment of the Timber Policies and Regulations

Poorly implemented selective logging policies and regulations have been identified as a leading cause of deforestation and land degradation in Liberia³⁵. There is extensive commercial logging, over-logging, hi-impact logging and chainsaw logging in local communities in Liberia. Compliance with social and environmental practices by logging operators is often limited. This is more evident in indigenous community forestlands with high commercial value timber species. All these have severe negative impact on the livelihoods of indigenous and local community households. The timber policies and regulations do not sufficiently address gender equality issues related to the impact of unsustainable logging practices, especially on women who use the forest for cultivation of mixed food crops (rice, cassava and vegetables), firewood, and medicinal plants for their livelihoods.

³³ Weah, Julie T.B. (2012). Women and Forests in Liberia: Gender Policy and Women's Participation in the Forest Sector of Liberia Brief #1 of 4. Olden, Mark (2014). Liberia's Timber: From Curse to Blessing?

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³⁵ REFACOF (2014). The Role of Women in Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Liberia: A case study of women's perception in Gbarpolu County. http://www.itto.int/files/itto_project_db_input/3047/Technical/Rapport_Liberia_FINAL_Mai14.pdf

5. Summary of the views of Selected Gender Informants on Women's Rights and Gender Policies Related to the Selected Agricultural and Timber Value Chains in Liberia

Several key informants with experience in women's rights and gender equality were consulted to include their perspectives on the gender-sensitivity of the policies related to the selected agricultural value chains and timber. The common themes from their feedback included the following:

- i. That addressing women's issues in the agriculture sector requires a holistic approach that strengthens institutional capacity and policies, raises awareness within communities, facilitates women's access to relevant education and employment.

(Zina Gbarbea, Champion for Market Women Empowerment).

- ii. Women pay a higher price for poverty and food insecurity because they are responsible for unpaid domestic and reproductive duties in addition to agricultural demands; and women's multiple and demanding duties are often not considered work.

(Parleh D. Harris, Former Director for Women's Empowerment and Deputy Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection).

- iii. Women in the home greatly support their men in carrying out farming activities but men always dominate them when it comes to availability of finance; their rights are limited in terms of land ownership therefore many of them are not ready to engage in agriculture as subsistence farming rather than business; they also lack access to loans, modern equipment to carry out large scale farming, and training in production, processing, and marketing.

(Yaah Belleh Suah, Rural Women Head, Sanniquellie, Nimba County).

- iv. Although the Government of Liberia has undertaken many reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, many challenges still remain such as: limited access to information, low prosecution of perpetrators of rape, abuses and other cases of Gender-Based Violence, limited training programs for women, and limited involvement in political decisionmaking at the local and national levels.

(Sylvia Brown Paye, Women's Activist and Employee of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection).

- v. The Government of Liberia has formulated many useful gender laws and policies regarding access to, control and ownership of land, and agriculture and forestry value chains. However, implementation is a major challenge. Advocacy is therefore critical to hold government accountable for implementation of gender policies affecting agriculture and timber value chains. Community members, especially women, need more information and awareness on issues affecting their lives. This will cultivate awareness among both men and women in regard to agro-commodity value chains. (Julie Weah, Executive Director of Foundation for Community Initiatives).

These views of key informants are consistent with the findings of this assessment as well as the feedback from participants of the stakeholders' validation workshop held to discuss the draft report of the "gender assessment of the policy environment in relation to the cocoa oil, oil palm, rubber and timber value chains in Liberia".

6. Discussion and Conclusions

According to IFC (2019), one of the challenges the agribusiness sector will face in the coming years is the ability to navigate the rapidly rising demand for agricultural and forest products (including cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber) from farm to retail. One of the main solutions to the challenges is to improve women's access to assets, enabling them to fully participate in all aspects of agribusiness. This will require responsive gender-smart policies, strategies and initiatives.

Liberia has made significant progress in enacting many policies and strategies, including the National Gender Policy, which are attempting to address gender inequality, especially women's rights and inclusion in all sectors of the economy, including agricultural and forestry/timber value chains. Most of the policies and strategies reviewed in relation to mainstreaming gender equality issues in the cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber value chains acknowledge gender inequality and recognise the need to pay special attention to women's involvement for sustainable governance and management of these value chains. Gender equality and women's empowerment are mentioned in most of the policies and strategies.

Regardless of the many policies and strategies that have been enacted by the Government, many challenges still remain in terms of achieving the objectives of these policies and strategies. The challenges of mainstreaming gender equality issues in development activities in Liberia is not the lack of policies and strategies, but due to the following multi-faceted reasons:

- i. The policies and strategies are many, but they are not properly synchronised and consolidated. Therefore, the aims and objectives of mainstreaming gender equality issues in programmes and projects, particularly women's participation in the management of cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber value chains, are not being achieved.
- ii. It appears that the policies and strategies regarding the selected values developed were not based on a comprehensive gender-sensitive value chain analysis and mapping of each of the value chains from production to consumption. Gender-sensitive value chain mapping would have provided evidence-based insights regarding the specific tasks men, women and youth perform, and how they interact with other actors along the various value chains. Due to the lack of a thorough gender-sensitive analysis and mapping, the statements in the policies and strategies in relation to cocoa, oil palm rubber and timber appear superficial and lack concrete actions and implementation mechanisms to increase women's participation in the management of these value chains.
- iii. Activities related to women are often grouped together and considered as cross-cutting issues in major national policies and strategies reviewed as well as the Agenda for Transformation (AfT), Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD), and Liberia Agriculture Sector Investment Programme (LASIP)]. Grouping women's rights and gender equality under cross-cutting issues often leads to women issues being glossed over in major activities and funding.
- iv. Implementation of existing policies and strategies that have been enacted by the Government to mainstream gender equality issues in the selected agriculture and timber value chains seems to be ineffective due to weak institutional and human capacities of the government as well as a lack of political will. Thus, the policies are not properly coordinated in terms of adequate resourcing, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data in the various thematic areas, and a lack of regular reporting on gender mainstreaming activities along various agricultural and timber value chains in the country persists.
- v. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) are necessary for effective implementation of the existing (and future) policies and strategies regarding cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber. These value chains are controlled by private entrepreneurs and concessions. Government's major role is to enact and monitor gender-sensitive policies and strategies, while their implementation depends on the

private sector, especially those that are involved in the cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber value chains.

7. Recommendations

Based on the gender assessment of the policy environment in relation to cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber value chains in Liberia, the following recommendations are being proposed:

- i.** The Government of Liberia should ensure that existing and future policies are synchronised, consolidated and better resourced to provide a system for monitoring policy implementation to ensure women's participation in the governance and management of cocoa, oil palm, rubber and timber value chains as well other sectors of the economy.
- ii.** The Ministry of Agriculture and its development partners, including bilateral and donor agencies and private sector actors, should conduct gender-smart mapping and analysis that clearly disaggregate the specific roles and responsibilities of men and women along the various agricultural and timber value chains.
- iii.** There is a need to strengthen public-private-partnerships (PPPs) to ensure implementation both by the government and private sector actors of the gender policies and strategies aimed at achieving the involvement of diverse women across all sectors of the economy, especially agriculture and forestry.
- iv.** The meaningful participation of diverse women in value chains should go beyond inclusion of women and also pay special attention to the work environment and conditions owing to the fact that women and men have different needs and roles that require different incentives and environments to achieve their long term objectives.
- v.** The government, development partners and private sector should, amongst other things:
 - ensure that the laws and policies affecting the agriculture and timber value chains are monitored and enforced
 - follow up agro-commodity production project implementation through monitoring and evaluation of sex disaggregated data
 - build institutional capacity of organisations supporting agro-commodity producers and offer targeted subsidies to individual producers; and
 - ensure efficient dissemination of information regarding existing gender laws and policies regarding agriculture and timber value chains.
- vi.** Treat women's rights and gender equality not merely as a cross-cutting issue in national policies and strategies, but to view this as a standalone strategic pillar, vis-a-vis the various activities across the value chains. This will guarantee that existing gender gaps that require urgent attention in each of value chains, especially concerning women's needs, priorities and challenges are adequately addressed.

Annex 1. List of Key Informants Contacted

S/N	NAME	INSTITUTION	LOCATION
1	Zina Gbarbea	Champion for Market Women Empowerment	Monrovia
2	Parleh D. Harris	Former Director for Women's Empowerment & Deputy	Monrovia
3	Yaah Belleh Suah	Rural Women Head, Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection	Sanniquellie, Nimba County
4	Sylvia Brown Paye	Women's Activist, Employee of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection	Monrovia
5	Julie Weah	Executive Director of Foundation for Community Initiatives	Duazon, Margi County

Annex 2. List of Participants of the Validation Workshop of the Gender Policy Report

Golden Key Hotel - Paynesville, Monrovia, Liberia – 22nd November 2019

S/N	NAME	INSTITUTION	LOCATION
1	Joseph T. K. Ballah	Rice and Rights Foundation	Johnsonville, Montserrado County
2	Franklin W. Philips	Rubber Planters Association of Liberia	Monrovia
3	Wilhelmina G M. Siaway	Rubber Planters Association of Liberia	Monrovia
4	Abibatu T. Kromah	Central Agricultural Research Institution	Suakoko, Bong County
5	Cleopatra Gibson Jallay	Ministry of Agriculture	Monrovia
6	Mbakai Varpilah Woyee	Ministry of Agriculture	Monrovia
7	Amelia S. Flomo	Kofi Annan Institution for Conflict Transformation	Monrovia
8	Gregory T. Logan	Ministry of Agriculture	Monrovia
9	Sonnie K. Gborie	College of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Liberia	Fendall, Montserrado County
10	Julie T B. Weah	Foundation for Community Initiatives	Duazon, Margibi County
11	Yaah Belleh Suah	Nimba Rural Women, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection	Sanniquellie, Nimba County
12	Veronica B. Gray	Natural Resource Women Platform	Monrovia
13	Mulbah Jackollie	Assessment Team Member	Monrovia
14	Moses M. Zinnah	University of Liberia - Lead Consultant of Assessment Team	Fendall, Montserrado County
15	Jackie N. W. Doe	Liberia Labour Congress	Monrovia
16	Manu Kamara	MBL	Monrovia
17	Olive B. Cisco	Assessment Team Member	Monrovia
18	Robert K. Fagans, Sr.	Ministry of Agriculture	Monrovia
19	Emmett Crayton	Assessment Team Member	Monrovia
20	Julius M. Bass	Farmers Union Network	Monrovia
21	Daikai Yorwatei	Ministry of Agriculture	Duazon, Margibi County

22	James Parker	Proforest	Accra, Ghana
23	Mina Beyan	Social Entreperneurs for Sustainable Development	Paynesville, Monsterrado County



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