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Report No: PAD4965

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION

PROJECT APPRAISAL DOCUMENT

ON A

PROPOSED CREDIT

IN THE AMOUNT OF SDR 20.0 MILLION
(US\$26.8 MILLION EQUIVALENT)

AND A

PROPOSED GRANT

IN THE AMOUNT OF SDR 13.3 MILLION
(US\$17.8 MILLION EQUIVALENT)

TO THE

REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA

FOR A

LIBERIA WOMEN EMPOWERMENT PROJECT

May 31, 2022

Social Sustainability and Inclusion Global Practice
Western and Central Africa Region

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CURRENCY EQUIVALENTS

(Exchange Rate Effective April 30, 2022)

Currency Unit = Special Drawing Right (SDR)

US\$ 1 = SDR 0.74388157

FISCAL YEAR

January 1 - December 31

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ASRH	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
CBA	Community Based Agent
CCAP	Climate Change Action Plan
CE	Citizen Engagement
CER	Contingency Emergency Response
CERC	Contingent Emergency Response Component
CO	Country Office
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPF	Country Partnership Framework
DA	Designated Account
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EAŞE	Economic and Social Empowerment Program
ESCP	Environmental and Social Commitment Plan
ESF	Environmental and Social Framework
ESMF	Environmental and Social Management Framework
ESRS	Environmental and Social Review Summary
FCV	Fragility, Conflict, and Violence
FGM/C	Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting
FM	Financial Management
GAC	General Audit Commission
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GBVIMS	Gender-Based Violence Information Management System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoL	Government of Liberia
GRID	Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development
GRPB	Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
GRS	Grievance Redress Service
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
IDA	International Development Association
IFR	Interim Financial Report
IPF	Investment Project Financing
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRISE	Improving Results in Secondary Education
ISP	Implementation Support Plan
ISSAI	International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions
IT	Information Technology
IPMP	Integrated Pest Management Plan

LMP	Labor Management Plan
LWEP	Liberia Women Empowerment Project
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDA	Ministry, Department, and Agency
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning
MFDP	Ministry of Finance and Development Planning
MGCSP	Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PAPD	Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
PDO	Project Development Objective
PFMU	Project Fiduciary Management Unit
PIM	Project Implementation Manual
PMU	Project Management Unit
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RF	Results Framework
RPF	Resettlement Policy Framework
SASA!	Start, Awareness, Support, Action
SBCC	Social and Behavior Change Communication
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SH	Sexual Harassment
SORT	Systematic Operations Risk-rating Tool
STAR-P	Smallholder Agriculture Transformation and Agribusiness Revitalization Project
TC	Technical Committee
TOR	Terms of Reference
TTL	Task Team Leader
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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DATASHEET

BASIC INFORMATION

Country(ies)	Project Name	
Liberia	Liberia Women Empowerment Project	
Project ID	Financing Instrument	Environmental and Social Risk Classification
P173677	Investment Project Financing	Moderate

Financing & Implementation Modalities

<input type="checkbox"/> Multiphase Programmatic Approach (MPA)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contingent Emergency Response Component (CERC)
<input type="checkbox"/> Series of Projects (SOP)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fragile State(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Performance-Based Conditions (PBCs)	<input type="checkbox"/> Small State(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial Intermediaries (FI)	<input type="checkbox"/> Fragile within a non-fragile Country
<input type="checkbox"/> Project-Based Guarantee	<input type="checkbox"/> Conflict
<input type="checkbox"/> Deferred Drawdown	<input type="checkbox"/> Responding to Natural or Man-made Disaster
<input type="checkbox"/> Alternate Procurement Arrangements (APA)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hands-on Enhanced Implementation Support (HEIS)

Expected Approval Date	Expected Closing Date
22-Jun-2022	30-Jun-2027

Bank/IFC Collaboration

No

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The project development objective is to improve social and livelihood services for women and girls in targeted communities, foster positive social norms and strengthen the government's capacity to advance women and girls' empowerment.

**Components**

Component Name	Cost (US\$, millions)
Fostering positive social norms and community mobilization	8.00
Enhancing basic services in health and education	5.40
Promoting resilient livelihoods through community-led approaches	23.60
Strengthening public institutions to advance gender equality	4.00
Project management, monitoring and evaluation	3.60
Contingent Emergency Response Component	0.00

Organizations

Borrower: Republic of Liberia

Implementing Agency: Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP)

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US\$, Millions)**SUMMARY**

Total Project Cost	44.60
Total Financing	44.60
of which IBRD/IDA	44.60
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS**World Bank Group Financing**

International Development Association (IDA)	44.60
IDA Credit	26.80
IDA Grant	17.80



IDA Resources (in US\$, Millions)

	Credit Amount	Grant Amount	Guarantee Amount	Total Amount
Liberia	26.80	17.80	0.00	44.60
National PBA	26.80	17.80	0.00	44.60
Total	26.80	17.80	0.00	44.60

Expected Disbursements (in US\$, Millions)

WB Fiscal Year	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Annual	0.00	1.00	8.00	14.00	14.60	5.97	1.03
Cumulative	0.00	1.00	9.00	23.00	37.60	43.57	44.60

INSTITUTIONAL DATA

Practice Area (Lead)

Social Sustainability and Inclusion

Contributing Practice Areas

Agriculture and Food, Climate Change, Gender

Climate Change and Disaster Screening

This operation has been screened for short and long-term climate change and disaster risks

SYSTEMATIC OPERATIONS RISK-RATING TOOL (SORT)

Risk Category	Rating
1. Political and Governance	● Moderate
2. Macroeconomic	● Moderate
3. Sector Strategies and Policies	● Low
4. Technical Design of Project or Program	● Substantial
5. Institutional Capacity for Implementation and Sustainability	● Substantial
6. Fiduciary	● High
7. Environment and Social	● Moderate



8. Stakeholders	● Moderate
9. Other	
10. Overall	● Substantial

COMPLIANCE**Policy**

Does the project depart from the CPF in content or in other significant respects?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Does the project require any waivers of Bank policies?

☐ Yes ☒ No

Environmental and Social Standards Relevance Given its Context at the Time of Appraisal

E & S Standards	Relevance
Assessment and Management of Environmental and Social Risks and Impacts	Relevant
Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure	Relevant
Labor and Working Conditions	Relevant
Resource Efficiency and Pollution Prevention and Management	Relevant
Community Health and Safety	Relevant
Land Acquisition, Restrictions on Land Use and Involuntary Resettlement	Relevant
Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Management of Living Natural Resources	Relevant
Indigenous Peoples/Sub-Saharan African Historically Underserved Traditional Local Communities	Not Currently Relevant
Cultural Heritage	Relevant
Financial Intermediaries	Not Currently Relevant



NOTE: For further information regarding the World Bank's due diligence assessment of the Project's potential environmental and social risks and impacts, please refer to the Project's Appraisal Environmental and Social Review Summary (ESRS).

Legal Covenants

Sections and Description

Schedule 2. Section I. A. 2. Project Steering Committee:

(a) The Recipient shall not later than sixty (60) days of the Effective Date, establish a steering committee ("Project Steering Committee"), and thereafter, maintain, throughout the period of Project implementation said steering committee with mandate, composition, and resources, satisfactory to the Association ("Project Steering Committee").

(b) Without limitation upon the provisions of paragraph 1(a) immediately above, the Project Steering Committee shall be responsible for: (a) reviewing the overall progress of the Project, annual work plans and budgets; (b) providing strategic and policy direction on all Project activities.

Sections and Description

Schedule 2. Section I. A. 4. Technical Committee:

Without limitation to the provisions of paragraph 2 of this Section I.A, the Recipient shall within sixty (60) days of the Effective Date, establish a technical committee ("Technical Committee") with terms of reference and functions, satisfactory to the Association, and thereafter, maintain said Project Technical Committee with the responsibility for providing guidance on technical discussions and as a multi-sectoral coordination a forum for discussing implementation issues and solutions to roadblocks and challenges under the Project.

Sections and Description

Schedule 2. Section I. A. 3 (b) (ii): The Recipient shall not later than sixty (60) days of the Effective Date, recruit and thereafter maintain a communication and community engagement specialist, and a financial management assistant, all in accordance with the Procurement Regulations

Sections and Description

ESCP: No later than six months after project effectiveness but before start of any activities where project actors interact with beneficiaries for the project, and thereafter implement the SEA/SH Action Plan throughout project implementation.

Sections and Description

ESCP: The National Level GRM at the MGCSP shall be established before project effectiveness. Whereas a full functional GRM with fully trained GRC members shall be established and operational prior to project activities and operational throughout the Project implementation.

Sections and Description

ESCP: Conduct a deep-dive stakeholder engagement six months after effectiveness and after on-boarding of the project social specialist and will update the SEP for the Association/s review and clearance and will redisclose.

Sections and Description



ESCP: One Environmental Specialist, one Social Specialist, one Community Engagement and Communication Specialist and a Women's Economic Empowerment/Livelihoods Specialist will be hired and be on duty six months after Project Effectiveness.

Conditions

Type Effectiveness	Financing source IBRD/IDA	Description The Recipient shall prepare and adopt, a Project Implementation Manual, in form and substance satisfactory to the Association
Type Effectiveness	Financing source IBRD/IDA	Description The Recipient shall: (i) establish the Project Management Unit (PMU) with functions, and terms of reference satisfactory to the association; and (ii) hire to the PMU a Project coordinator, a procurement specialist, a finance officer, and a gender specialist, all in accordance with the provisions of the Procurement Regulations
Type Disbursement	Financing source IBRD/IDA	Description No withdrawal shall be made under Category (1) unless the Recipient has hired an NGO, or other Non-profit organization to support the implementation of Parts A, B and C of the Project, referred to in Section I.A.5 of the Schedule 2 of the Financing Agreement, in accordance with the Procurement Regulations.
Type Disbursement	Financing source IBRD/IDA	Description No withdrawal shall be made under Category (2) unless the Recipient has prepared and adopted the Livelihood Grants Manual, in form and substance satisfactory to the Association



I. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

A. Country Context

1. **Liberia has made notable gains since the end of civil conflict in 2003 but has struggled to translate growth into deep and sustainable reductions in poverty and inequality— including gender inequality.** Following the end of two decades of war, instability and economic contraction, the country experienced a fragile but sustained postwar recovery, with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth and the consolidation of peace and stability. However, inequality continues to manifest in acute regional, urban-rural and gender disparities, with poverty in rural areas much higher than in urban ones, and gender inequality consistently high in both settings. Today, Liberia remains one of the poorest countries in the world. It placed 175th out of 189 countries on the 2020 United Nations (UN) Human Development Index, with a gross national income per capita of US\$570 in 2020, and a poverty rate of more than 50 percent in 2016.¹

2. **Women have not shared equally in the dividends of peace since the end of civil conflict.** Large numbers of women have been excluded from the country's growth by persistently high gender disparities. Ranked 156th out of 162 countries on the 2019 Gender Inequality Index,² Liberian women and girls are disadvantaged in practically all spheres of society, and throughout their lives. Women have fewer, less stable, and less lucrative job opportunities, lower human capital accumulation, and fewer choices. Within this context, social norms are a significant barrier to women's empowerment, limiting women's and girls' ability to pursue economic opportunities and access quality social and livelihoods services.³ Furthermore, gender-based violence (GBV) impacts women and girls across their entire life cycle, from high rates of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and early marriage in childhood to endemic intimate partner violence (IPV)—nearly half (45.5 percent) of Liberian women have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence from a husband or partner within the past 12 months.⁴ These gaps are exacerbated by the limited capacity of the Government to close gender gaps and address inequality.

3. **Repeated shocks and crises in Liberia have created further setbacks for potential gender equality gains.** The Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and the Ebola crisis have had unequal impacts on women and girls, especially in rural areas.⁵ During the Ebola crisis, analysis shows that restrictions limiting the access of traders to key markets, along with the closure of Liberia's borders at the peak of the crisis, resulted in losses for women, who account for 70 percent of small-scale traders.⁶ Further, girls suffered the most because of a lack of access to quality adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH)

¹ Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) (2016). *Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2014-2015*.

² United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2020). <https://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>.

³ Cunningham, W., Gupta, S., Johansson de Silva, S. (forthcoming). *An Assessment of Gender Gaps in Liberia Through a Women's Empowerment Lens*.

⁴ LISGIS, Ministry of Health (Liberia), and ICF (2021). *Liberia DHS 2019-2020*. Monrovia and Rockville, Maryland, the United States of America.

⁵ World Bank (2021). *Liberia Economic Update, June 2021. Finding Fiscal Space*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34271>.

⁶ Korkoyah, D., and Wreah, F. (2015). *Ebola Impact Revealed: An Assessment of the Differing Impact of the Outbreak on Women and Men in Liberia*. https://www-cdn.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/file_attachments/rr-ebola-impact-women-men-liberia-010715-en.pdf.



services, which contributed to a spike in teenage pregnancy.⁷ These impacts have been repeated during the COVID-19 pandemic, shedding light on the lack of women's representation in decision making and subsequently the challenge of learning from previous crises. Research shows that while women were disproportionately affected by COVID-19, they were excluded from the decision-making process for policies that impact them—instead decision makers at the local and national level were mostly men.⁸ The persistent social norms that have favored men as the decision makers have also placed a higher care burden on women. With lockdowns and significant reductions in already limited social and economic services, and limited resilience due to previous shocks, women have been more negatively impacted by the recent crises.

4. **In rural areas, climate change shocks and climate variability are an increasing threat to women's livelihoods and resilience, and a growing barrier to their empowerment.** Liberia experiences a range of natural climate hazards, including droughts, epidemic diseases, storms, and floods. Mean annual temperature has increased by 0.8°C between 1960 and 2006, an average rate of 0.18°C per decade.⁹ In addition, it is expected that by 2100, Liberia's sea levels will rise 0.6-1.0 meters, devastating climate-sensitive livelihoods such as agriculture and fisheries, and triggering mass climate migration and displacement.¹⁰ Key factors account for the gendered differences in vulnerability to climate risks in Liberia, including a high concentration of women in climate-vulnerable sectors (amounting to 88.2 percent);¹¹ gendered differences in time use; imbalanced access to assets, credit, and information; and unequal participation in decision-making around mitigation and adaptation measures.¹² The follow-on impacts on women's social, physical and economic well-being are immense: changing climate means increased household care burdens (as clean water and fuel become scarce), less education and fewer opportunities (as household demands reduce girls' access to education), and greater exposure to GBV (as domestic stress levels increase). See Annex 2 on Gender and Climate for further information.

5. **The Government of Liberia (GoL) is committed to reducing gender inequality as part of its broader development agenda and climate adaptation strategy.** GoL has set as one of its core aspirations "a society of gender equity, empowerment and opportunities for all" in its Vision 2030. Addressing inequality between men and women necessitates a focus on empowerment. GoL recognizes this and has included specific women's empowerment and GBV reduction targets and actions in its Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development 2018-2023 (PAPD).¹³ Liberia's National Adaptation Plan (NAP) (2020-2030) also marks a fundamental landmark in addressing its susceptibility and resilience to climate change.¹⁴

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Mendin, S. (August 2020). *The gendered impacts of COVID-19: Reflections from Liberian Women*, Last Mile Health. <https://lastmilehealth.org/2020/08/06/gendered-impacts-of-covid-19/>

⁹ World Bank (2021). *Liberia Climate Risk Country Profile*. https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/15917-WB_Liberia%20Country%20Profile-WEB%20%281%29.pdf

¹⁰ Data-Pop Alliance, UN Women, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (2021). *Liberia Country Gender Equality Profile: Report*. <https://datapopalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Report-UNW-liberia.pdf>

¹¹ Green Climate Fund (2020). *Gender Assessment: Enhancing Climate Information Systems (CIS) for Resilient Development in Liberia*. <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/sap018-gender-assessment.pdf>

¹² Data-Pop Alliance (2021). *Liberia Country Gender Equality Profile: Issue Paper*.

¹³ The Government of the Republic of Liberia. *Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD). A Five-Year National Development Plan Towards Accelerated, Inclusive, and Sustainable Development (July 2018 – June 2023)* (2018). Monrovia, Liberia. [https://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/Pro-Poor%20Agenda%20For%20Prosperity%20And%20Development%20book%20for%20Email%20sending%20\(1\).pdf%20-%20Compressed.pdf](https://www.emansion.gov.lr/doc/Pro-Poor%20Agenda%20For%20Prosperity%20And%20Development%20book%20for%20Email%20sending%20(1).pdf%20-%20Compressed.pdf)

¹⁴ The GoL, Environmental Protection Agency, UNDP. *National Adaptation Plan of Liberia (2020-2030)*. <https://unfccc.int/documents/424116>



Progress has also been made on key indicators for maternal mortality, girls' primary school enrollment, and laws and policies to address key gender equality issues including land rights and inheritance, intimate partner violence, and a range of other issues. However, with a constrained macroeconomic situation and limited budget allocations available to close gender gaps and address climate change impacts and risks, along with the competing demands of repeated health crises, new strategies are necessary to address the economic, social, and institutional barriers hindering the empowerment of women and girls.

B. Sectoral and Institutional Context

6. **In Liberia, women's empowerment is hindered by economic, social, and institutional barriers that exacerbate gender inequality.** Despite GoL's long standing efforts to move towards a more gender equal society, women's empowerment in Liberia is hindered by several interrelated barriers that prevent them from being fully included in socio-economic opportunities. These barriers do not operate in isolation: economic gender gaps in income, access to jobs and credit are closely linked to women's subordinate social status, as norms and beliefs about the roles of women and men drive women's significant household care burden and restrict their choices of employment to socially-acceptable, lower-paid roles. These barriers also increase the vulnerability of women and girls to the impacts of changing climatic conditions over time. Attitudes and beliefs about women's subordinate status also drive the wide acceptance of GBV, early marriage, adolescent pregnancy and FGM/C, and the devaluing of girls' education as compared to boys'. Low levels of education, early marriage and pregnancy, and limited access to healthcare as well as other services trap women in a cycle of poverty, are further limiting their opportunities and agency.

7. **Specifically, in rural contexts in Liberia, research shows that improving women's empowerment outcomes would require investments in socio-economic resources while addressing the underlying social norms to enable a context where women's agency can be strengthened.** In the classic definition, "empowerment" means the process by which those who have been denied the ability to make strategic life choices acquire that ability—a process which requires resources (including material, human and social assets), but also the capacity to exercise agency and make choices, which together lead to achievements (i.e., outcomes that reflect women's enhanced well-being).¹⁵ In Liberia, this means that women's empowerment requires not just economic resources and social services—i.e., access to income, assets, job opportunities, and quality health and education services—but also removal of social barriers that hinder women's ability to make and act on choices for their lives, and support to build their individual and social capabilities and give them resilience to face future potential climate and pandemic shocks.

8. **Below is a detailed description of the barriers faced by women in the realms of social norms, services, and socio-economic opportunities hindering their empowerment.** The project's prioritization of these barriers is based on analytical work conducted in Liberia and globally regarding what works to promote women's empowerment and resilience and to address GBV, reviews of evaluations of programs that focus on gender equality through addressing social norms and promoting economic opportunities, and consultations with government counterparts and development partners.

¹⁵ Kabeer, N. (1999). *Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurements of Women's Empowerment*. Development and Change Vol. 30, 435-464. Oxford, the United Kingdom.: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.



Social norms and social service gaps hinder women's and girls' empowerment in Liberia

Social and gender norms¹⁶ that prioritize the position of men over women are a key barrier to empowerment in Liberia, reinforced by cultural, economic, and institutional forces. Liberian society generally follows a “patriarchal structure” in which men are the key decision makers, and women are expected to fulfill traditional roles as caregivers and pursue childbearing and domestic duties.¹⁷ This is clearly highlighted in the GoL’s PAPD (2018-2023) which notes that “assumptions based on traditional gendered roles perpetuate female subordination and prevent access to asset ownership rights and economic resources.”¹⁸ Concepts of strength, control, independence and income generation are associated with men, while concepts of obedience and submissiveness are linked to women. Social, economic and legal systems and institutions are built on these norms. While Liberia has enacted promising laws on gender equality in key areas including legal inheritance, land rights and GBV, these laws often conflict with customary laws and practices, which further reinforce women’s subordinate social position. Social norms limit women’s ability to take advantage of economic opportunities, limit their ability to make decisions, and hinder their participation in social and economic life.

9. **Social norms are a key driver of GBV, which has remained at consistently high levels in Liberia, negatively impacting women’s empowerment.** Violence—like other manifestations of gender inequality—is driven in part by norms that perpetuate the dominant position of men in society. Violence in Liberia is endemic across the life cycle of women and girls. Beginning in childhood, early marriage and FGM/C remain common: 29.5 percent of women and girls aged 20-49 were married before age 18 nationwide (with higher rates in rural areas), and 38 percent of those aged 15-49 say that they have been cut (2020 Demographic and Health Survey [DHS]).¹⁹ Women and girls also experience high rates of IPV: more than half (58.2 percent) have experienced emotional, physical or sexual violence from a husband or partner in their lifetime—and evidence suggests these figures may have increased in recent years.²⁰ Persistent violence in turn disempowers women, limiting their ability to access economic opportunities and education, as well as their decision-making power and ability to exercise control and ownership of assets.

10. **The prevalence of GBV has also increased with the recurrence of climate shocks and other crises.²¹** Evidence suggests that GBV has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, like the Ebola crisis

¹⁶ “Social norms” are rules of behavior that people in a group conform to because they believe that (i) most other people in the group do conform to it (i.e., it is *typical* behavior): and (ii) most other people in the group believe they ought to conform to it (i.e., it is *appropriate* behavior). Alexander-Scott, M., Bell, E. and Holden, J. (2016). *DFID Guidance Note: Shifting Social Norms to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)*. https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/VAWG%20HELPDESK_DFID%20GUIDANCE%20NOTE_SOCIAL%20NORMS_JAN%202016.pdf

¹⁷ Nilsson, M., Howard, J., Konyon, F., Tucker, H. (2019). *The challenge of unlearning: A study of gender norms and masculinities in Liberia*. Funded by the Embassy of Sweden and UN Women. See also UN Spotlight Initiative, *Comprehensive Sexual and GBV Prevention Strategy for Liberia* (2019); Oxfam in Liberia (2019). *Enough excuses: challenging gender and social norms supporting violence against women and girls in Liberia*. Funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands.

¹⁸ The Republic of Liberia. *Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development* (2018).

¹⁹ Liberia DHS (2020). The DHS questionnaire asks women if they have heard of female circumcision. 81 percent of women aged 15-49 have heard of female circumcision, and among these women, 38 percent say that they have been circumcised.

²⁰ According to the DHS, the prevalence of one or more of these forms of spousal violence is higher in 2020 than it was in 2007 (49 percent).

²¹ United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) (2021). *Climate change and gender-based violence: what are the links?* <https://gbvaor.net/sites/default/files/2021-03/gbv-aor-helpdesk-climate-change-gbv-19032021.pdf>



before it, as economic and social vulnerabilities have grown.²² Research has also found that the impacts of climate change are exacerbating the risk of violence against women and girls, especially in contexts where social norms have tolerated such violence.²³

11. Social norms also limit women and girls' ability to seek crucial social services, despite government efforts at the national level to improve service delivery. Almost half (48.3 percent) of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence have never sought help of any kind, and fewer than 4 percent have sought help from professional service providers (in the case of physical violence) (2020 DHS). This is a reflection of social stigma and financial barriers that limits the ability of women and girls to seek services, as well as significant gaps in available care. Liberia has one of the highest adolescent pregnancy rates in the world, with nearly a third of girls having begun childbearing (2020 DHS). Early pregnancies and early marriage affect girls' enrollment, retention, and completion rates in secondary school, with lasting impacts on their earning potential, health, and agency. Only 15 girls out of 100 who begin primary school advance to senior secondary school (grade 10). Safety from sexual violence in schools is also a significant concern.²⁴ Healthcare services and information to address ASRH, which are key to addressing these issues, are limited.²⁵ While training healthcare providers on adolescent-friendly services is identified as a government priority in the PAPD (2018-2023) and some progress has been made (including limited training on facility-based ASRH core competencies and the development of a comprehensive sex education curriculum by the Ministry of Health [MoH] and the Ministry of Education [MoE]), technical and organizational capacity within GoL to address ASRH remains limited and underprioritized given the scale of the issue and its impact on Liberia's social and economic development.

12. The Start, Awareness, Support, Action (SASA!) methodology is an approach tested in Liberia and a number of other countries that has been proven to be effective in fostering positive gender norms, with a focus on GBV. The SASA! methodology is implemented by local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and was first tested in Uganda by Raising Voices (a local Ugandan NGO).²⁶ A randomized control trial study conducted by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine showed social norms were improved with 76 percent reporting that violence against a partner was never justified (as opposed to 26 percent in control communities). The study

Box 1: SASA! methodology

SASA! is implemented in phases over several years: the first phase is a contextualization of the methodology to ensure that it is appropriate to the cultural and social context. The next phase focuses on knowledge outcomes with activities implemented through trained local activists that focus on building knowledge, changing attitudes, promoting dialogue and discussion and encouraging participation across communities. The third phase focuses on developing skills, taking action, promoting acceptance and building connections within communities. The final phase focuses on building capacity, both individual and collective, changing behavior and strengthening sustainability.

²² Mendin, S. (August 2020). *The gendered impacts of COVID-19: Reflections from Liberian Women*. Last Mile Health. <https://lastmilehealth.org/impact/research/>

²³ Climate change leads to economic stress, displacement, increased number and severity of natural disasters, which are all known risk factors for violence against women and girls. See also UN Women (2022). *Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change*. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-context-of-climate-change-en.pdf>

²⁴ IBIS, Concern Worldwide, Norwegian Refugee Council, Save the Children (2014). *Passing the test: the real cost of being a student*.

<https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/passing-test-real-cost-being-student/>

²⁵ UNFPA, the Embassy of Sweden and the Clinton Health Access Initiative are investing in and/or implementing ASRH activities.

²⁶ For more information on the SASA! approach, see <https://raisingvoices.org/women/the-sasa-approach/>



further showed a significant reduction in the risk of violence to women. At the end of the project, IPV against women was reduced by 52 percent.²⁷

Limited access to climate-resilient economic opportunities hinder women's empowerment

13. **Within a context in which social norms constrain women's empowerment, access to climate resilient economic opportunities for women is limited.** Women in rural areas in Liberia lack economic opportunities and the financial, material and social assets necessary to help them build prosperous lives and protect them against climate change and other shocks and stressors. Social norms and expectations about women's roles are key drivers: women's employment is overwhelmingly concentrated in climate-sensitive agriculture and in the informal services sector (86 percent of employed women work informally), with limited access to credit, professional services, job security, and the lowest levels of productivity in the economy. Though 45.6 percent of employed women work in agriculture and they make up the majority of the agricultural labor force, social expectations for women mean that their work is concentrated in the lower end of the value chain and in food crop production—only 22.6 percent of women working in agriculture earn cash payments.²⁸ Women are less likely to work in cash crop production and processing as compared to men, and carry an immense additional burden of household care. As climate change increases temperatures and alters rainfall patterns, agricultural yields are increasingly affected, and women are left vulnerable with limited access to the tools necessary for climate adaptation and resilience.

14. **Community-based saving groups are a widely used and effective method for providing livelihoods support, savings, access to credit, and greater economic agency for rural Liberian women.**²⁹ Evidence shows that in rural areas in Liberia, women working in community groups tend to benefit from the peer learning, mentorship, and networks, and that the group setting can act as a vehicle for women to expand their economic opportunities and reduce risk while building up resistance to shocks (the Ministry of Agriculture [MoA] in particular has been supportive of group-based approaches for rural women). Evidence also shows that community groups can address both economic and social barriers, enhancing women's access to savings, credit, technical training, and support while serving as a forum to deliver literacy, numeracy, and other basic life skills that are widely needed. Group solidarity and networks also facilitate their members' psychosocial factors, which in combination with economic factors and information sharing, strengthen members' and their households' abilities to be more resilient in the face of shocks including climate shocks and pandemic.

15. **The Government recognizes the need to move beyond gender targets in agriculture and toward program design that addresses women's economic and social needs.** Gender analysis conducted by GoL has found that some past programs had little influence on gender equality, in part because donor-funded initiatives had in the past focused primarily on percentage targets for women beneficiaries, rather than designing projects to address key gender gaps.³⁰ This approach is changing, with increased focus directly

²⁷ Abramsky, T., Devries, K., Kiss, L. et al. (2014). *Findings from the SASA! Study: a cluster randomized controlled trial to assess the impact of a community mobilization intervention to prevent violence against women and reduce HIV risk in Kampala, Uganda*. BMC Med 12, 122, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12916-014-0122-5>

²⁸ Data-Pop Alliance, UN Women, Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (2021). *Liberia Country Gender Equality Profile*. <https://datapopalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Report-UNW-liberia.pdf>

²⁹ Buvinic, M., O'Donnell, M., and Bourgault, S. (2020). *Women's Economic Empowerment in West Africa: Towards a Practical Research Agenda*. Center for Global development.

³⁰ Examples of such projects given in the STAR-P Gender Analysis include the Smallholder Tree Smallholder Tree Crop Revitalization Support Project (World Bank), the Smallholder Agricultural Productivity Enhancement and Commercialization Project (African Development Bank), and the Climate Change Adaptation Agriculture Project (UNDP), among others.



on women's needs, including through the recently-concluded UN Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (2014-2020), but the majority of recent agricultural livelihood projects focus on more economically advanced groups, such as agricultural production and processing cooperatives, which may lack components aimed at the needs of vulnerable women.³¹

Institutional capacity on gender is limited, hindering implementation of policies meant to empower women

16. **Gender equality is central to GoL's development agenda, but government initiatives do not effectively address the challenge given the scale of the need, limited institutional capacity, and a fragmented approach.** Despite significant efforts from GoL, capacity constraints and institutional weaknesses have hindered progress. The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MGCSP) is the leading agency working to promote gender equality and eliminate GBV, with broad mandates on gender, violence, child protection, and national leadership on gender-related data and support for gender-responsive budgeting and planning (which is led by Ministry of Finance and Development Planning [MFDP]). But it struggles to meet this mandate due to gaps in staffing, training, coordination, and resources for implementation, particularly in key divisions including the Division of Women Empowerment, the Division of Sexual, and Gender-Based Violence and the Department of Research, Policy, and Planning. These challenges are echoed in other ministries with under-resourced gender divisions including in MoA, which lacks the strategic plans, resources and sex-disaggregated data about women in agriculture that it needs to develop and implement meaningful strategies to address gender gaps. While strides have been made by MoH and MoE in addressing girls' primary school enrollment and reproductive health, resource and technical capacity constraints have prevented a comprehensive response to GBV and ASRH, critical issues hindering economic and human capital growth in Liberia.

17. **Fragmented approaches hinder GoL's capacity to address the contextual drivers of inequality and the links between economic needs, human capital, GBV, and climate resilience.** Given the interrelated and multisectoral nature of the barriers women face, a coordinated approach that includes multiple actors at the national and local level is a priority. However, coordination is routinely cited as one of the greatest challenges to making meaningful progress on gender equality in Liberia: work on health, education, and GBV tends to be siloed from economic and livelihoods strengthening efforts for women, despite the close linkages between poverty and vulnerability to GBV (and the importance of access to sustainable livelihoods as part of a quality GBV response). In turn, economic support is necessary to reduce women's poverty, but these efforts often engage only in limited ways with the underlying drivers of inequality, even though women's economic marginalization, vulnerability to GBV, and limited agency all stem in part from similar underlying beliefs and expectations about men's and women's social roles.

C. Relevance to Higher Level Objectives

18. **The project is aligned with the World Bank Group Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for the Republic of Liberia FY19-FY24 (Report No. 130753-LR), which highlights women's empowerment as a key strategy for growth.** The project will directly support Pillar II (Building Human Capital to Seize New Opportunities) of the CPF, specifically objectives II.5 which seeks to improve earnings generation opportunities for youth and women, and II.4 which seeks to improve access to and quality of education.

³¹ For example, the World Bank Rural Economic Transformation Project and Smallholder Agriculture Transformation and Agribusiness Revitalization Project; AfDB Smallholder Agriculture Development for Food and Nutrition Security Project; IFAD Tree Crops Extension Project; and UNDP Livelihood and Employment Creation Project.



These interventions are also aligned with the CPF's express targeting of gender inequality as a driver of fragility and conflict.

19. **The project will also complement ongoing World Bank-financed projects in Liberia while filling key gaps.** The project has been designed to complement the Smallholder Agriculture Transformation and Agribusiness Revitalization Project (STAR-P) (P160945) and the Rural Economic Transformation Project (P175263) and will operationalize some key recommendations coming out of gender analyses conducted under those projects. The project will implement subcomponent 2.b on promoting community engagement to empower girls in schools in coordination with the Improving Results in Secondary Education (IRISE) (P164932) and MoE. The project's focus on addressing gender norms and GBV prevention alongside livelihoods will also complement other economic empowerment work, such as the Liberia Social Safety Nets Project (P155293) and the Recovery of Economic Activity for Liberian Informal Sector Employment Project (P174417) and will fill gaps in the World Bank portfolio by placing constraints on women's voice and agency at the center of the empowerment effort. Under Component 4, the project will also provide a platform to engage with other Ministries implementing World Bank-financed projects that have a focus on empowering women and girls.

20. **The project aligns with the World Bank Group's crisis response approach to COVID-19, the "Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development" (GRID) approach and the World Bank Group's Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP) (2021-2025), as well as with priorities under the Gender Strategy and the Fragility, Conflict and Violence Strategy.** The activities outlined below seek to strengthen the economic, social, and climate resiliency of Liberian women, aligning with Pillar 2 of the World Bank Group's COVID-19 Crisis Response Approach Paper which focuses on protecting the poor and vulnerable impacted by the social and economic crisis and the World Bank Group's Action Plan on Adaptation and Resilience under its CCAP. Through its focus on green and resilient agricultural interventions that promote gender equality and women's inclusion, the project is also aligned with the Green, Resilient and Inclusive Development (GRID) approach.³² Finally, the project is aligned with the Fragility, Conflict, and Violence (FCV) strategy under the pillar to "prevent conflict and address interpersonal violence", and the World Bank Group Gender Equality strategy under the pillars "enhancing women's voice and agency" and "removing constraints to more and better jobs."

21. **Furthermore, the project is fully aligned with projects, policies, and strategies of the GoL in general and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MGCSP) in particular.** The project is aligned with the priorities under the PAPD (2018-2023), complementing Pillar One's focus on gender equality in political, social and economic life. The PAPD includes a range of women's empowerment objectives and interventions, including gender-responsive budgeting, stronger implementation of the National Gender Policy to eliminate discrimination, and GBV reduction targets. This project aligns with all four pillars of the PAPD with a strong focus on empowerment of the people through the emphasis of the entire project on empowerment of women (pillar 1), economy by supporting economic opportunities in areas with significant potential growth (pillar 2), sustaining the peace through a focus on reducing violence (pillar 3) and governance (pillar 4) through the strengthening of institutions within the GoL. The project complements these activities by focusing on the norms that drive discrimination and GBV, supporting key institutions to better implement gender policies, and providing economic and social livelihoods support directly to women in key sectors. The project is also fully aligned with recent government initiatives to

³² World Bank (2021). *From COVID-19 Crisis Response to Resilient Recovery – Saving Lives and Livelihoods while Supporting Green, Resilient and Inclusive Development (GRID)*.



advance implementation of key gender policies and plans, including the Second Phase of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2019-2023), the Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) Roadmap (2019-2022), the National Action Plan on the Prevention and Management of SGBV, and the MGCSP two-year Strategic Plan (2021-2023), which has informed the design of Component 4's capacity-building support for MGCSP. The project has also integrated climate-resilient activities in alignment with Liberia's NAP (2020-2030).

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. Project Development Objective (PDO)

22. **The PDO is to improve social and livelihood services for women and girls in targeted communities, foster positive social norms and strengthen the government's capacity to advance women and girls' empowerment.** *Social services* are defined as services pertaining to ARSH, GBV services and education; *livelihoods services* are defined as provision of training, grants, and strengthening of cooperative groups; and *social norms* are defined as norms that accept and promote violence against women. PDO level indicators are as follows:

- (i) Men and women supported by the project that believe intimate partner violence is not justified (Percentage) (disaggregated by sex)
- (ii) Community members engaged in the program think that adolescent girls should not marry before 18 (Percentage)
- (iii) Women benefiting from climate resilient livelihood activities supported by the project (Number)
- (iv) Women and girls benefiting from project-supported facilities (education, GBV, and ASRH) (Percentage)
- (v) Platform for policy dialogue on gender, empowerment, and GBV established (Yes/No)
- (vi) Sex-disaggregated data collection capacity built (Yes/No)

B. Project Components

23. **The project design will lay the groundwork for future national programming on women and girls' empowerment in Liberia.** Addressing the constraints on women and girls' economic and social progress, mitigating their vulnerabilities to climate shocks, and achieving their equal treatment in Liberian society is a long-term prospect. No single project can or should address every gap. Lessons learned show that a multi-sectoral approach to women's empowerment within sustained investment over time is possible.

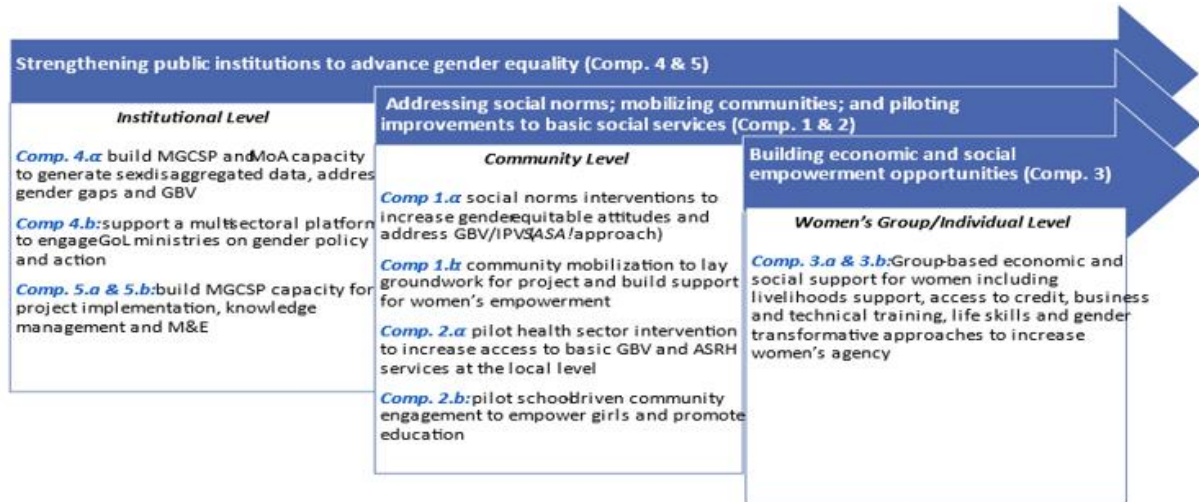
24. **The project will focus on the following barriers to equality and empowerment:** Using a "whole community" approach,³³ the project will implement (i) the *SASA!* methodology to foster positive social norms, complemented by enhancements to basic services in health and education, and (ii) economic and social empowerment interventions for women to build their economic resources and agency. The whole community approach will be complemented on the national level with (iii) activities to build the capacity

³³ In the context of this project, a "whole community" approach means that the project's activities will target not only women and girls but also men, boys, and community leaders who can influence community-level social norms and foster shifts in attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors on gender. "Whole community" also refers to the project's work with multiple community actors (including individuals, service providers, and other institutions) to address interrelated economic and social dimensions of women's empowerment.



of key institutions, in particular MGCSP (the Implementing Agency) and MoA to address gender inequality, and create a platform for greater GoL engagement on policies and actions to empower women and girls.

Figure 1: Proposed Structure of the Liberia Women Empowerment Project (LWEP)



25. **The project is expected to impact women's voice, agency and economic opportunities at scale.** The project will (i) work at the community level to foster positive social and gender norms and pilot enhancements to social services in health and education; (ii) ensure that half of the project's funds are allocated to climate-resilient livelihoods for women at community level; and (iii) allocate funds at the national level to strengthen institutions with key gender mandates and to scale up this approach, delivering value country-wide. The project builds on the growing evidence in Liberia specifically, and globally, that integrated interventions that address multiple barriers to gender equality can be more impactful than singular ones,³⁴ and that economic and social dimensions of empowerment can be addressed together.

26. **The project will be implemented using a phased approach.** Community-based components (1, 2, and 3) will be implemented within the same communities in a total of six counties, targeting approximately 750 communities and up to 267,200 people. Given the project's innovative design, counties will be sequenced to provide lessons learned from early activities before scaling up to additional counties in the second and third years of implementation. Phase 1 counties will be Gbarpolu and rural areas of Montserrado. Phase 2 counties are under discussion and may include Bomi, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, or River Cess. Communities will be selected using targeting criteria that take into account areas of particular need (including high vulnerability to climate change impacts); the presence of existing community groups that can be strengthened (women-only groups or mixed groups with a higher percentage of women; in later stages the focus may shift to creation of new groups); the presence of basic healthcare and education infrastructure, and feasibility of access to multiple communities/denser population areas by project staff. In later stages, the project may prioritize more remote areas.

³⁴ Buvinic, M., O'Donnell, M., Bourgault, S. (2020). *Women's Economic Empowerment in West Africa: Towards a Practical Research Agenda*. CDG Working Paper 584. Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development. <https://www.cgdev.org/publication/womens-economic-empowerment-west-africa-towards-practical-research-agenda>.



27. **Given the integrated approach of the project at community level, the Implementing Agency (MGCSP) will engage a Lead Service Provider to form a consortium of service providers (NGOs and/or other not-for-profit organizations) to implement Components 1, 2, and 3.** The Lead Service Provider will have a proven track record of managing large projects along with the technical and managerial capacity required to both implement and coordinate the project (as further discussed below).

28. **Given that the project is envisioned as a starting point for long-term engagement on women's empowerment, sustainability will be prioritized.** At the institutional level, a dedicated component on capacity building for MGCSP will lay the groundwork for better data generation, gender programming and service delivery. At the community level, the project will implement long-term approaches to shifting social norms that have been shown to have a sustained impact past the life of the project. The project's livelihood investments will also focus on sustainable business plans.

29. **As such the project will have the following components as outlined in the table below.**

Table 1: Project components and cost

Project Component	Project Cost (US\$ million)	Percent of total budget
Component 1: Fostering positive social norms and community mobilization	8.0	18 percent
Component 2: Enhancing basic services in health and education	5.4	12 percent
Component 3: Promoting resilient livelihoods through community-led approaches	23.6	53 percent
Component 4: Strengthening public institutions to advance gender equality	4.0	9 percent
Component 5: Project management and knowledge management	3.6	8 percent
Component 6: Contingent emergency response component	0	0 percent
Total	44.6	

Component 1: Fostering positive social norms and community mobilization (US\$8.0 million equivalent)

30. This component will be comprised of two subcomponents: (1.a) fostering positive social norms through the implementation of the SASA! methodology in all targeted communities, and (1.b) strengthening community mobilization and CE in the project areas.

Subcomponent 1.a: Fostering positive social norms through the implementation of the SASA! Methodology (US\$6.0 million)

31. This component will finance implementation of the SASA! methodology, a community mobilization and social and behavioral change communication (SBCC) approach used widely in Sub-Saharan Africa (including Liberia)³⁵ to address GBV prevention, specifically IPV. SASA! has been shown through impact evaluations to positively shift beliefs and attitudes towards gender equality and to reduce acceptance of

³⁵ NGOs that have implemented SASA! include International Rescue Committee, Plan International and Medica Liberia.



violence and women's experience of IPV.^{36 37} The activities that will be financed by SASA! methodology are described below:

32. The SASA! approach³⁸ involves three interrelated strategies for holistic community engagement across key circles of influence: (i) local activism; (ii) community leadership; and (iii) institutional strengthening. Under local activism the component will finance the training of local activist/facilitators, who then lead communities through four SASA! phases (*Start, Awareness, Support* and *Action*), conducting structured discussions with community members about gender relations and their impact on the lives of both women and men. In the *Start* phase, the component will finance identification of community structures and activists who will be trained, and a development of a curriculum that will be contextualized to address the norms, structures, and experiences of women and girls. During the *Awareness* phase, the component will finance implementation of the curriculum, discussion groups in the target communities led by the community activists trained during the first phase. The curriculum has an emphasis on participation, critical thinking and engagement by participants. During the *Support* phase, the component will finance community led activities to help build momentum to make their voices of positive social norms heard and hold community members accountable to address power imbalances; and during the *Action* phase, activists and communities will be supported to formalize mechanisms that reject violence and encourage balanced power between men and women. Each phase will require 7-12 months; and may vary by county with rural areas requiring longer implementation periods.

33. In parallel with the local activism strategy, the component will also finance the “community leadership” strategy which focuses on strategic engagement of leaders—elders, cultural and religious leaders, counselors, service providers (such as police and healthcare workers), local government officials, teachers and others—to use their role and influence in the community to prevent violence against women through structured discussions and training. As with the local activists, leaders are selected and trained for the role. Prior to the start of implementation of subcomponent 1.a, the component will finance a mapping of local actors to ensure that all stakeholders with a relevant role are included and consulted on the objectives, activities, and the potential positive outcomes of the approach. This will include the local civil and religious leaders, as well as structures prominent in women's empowerment (including peace huts and GBV observatories), in addition to ministries such as the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

34. Finally, the “institutional strengthening” strategy will focus on MGCSP at the national and local level. Under this strategy, MGCSP (as an institution with a significant mandate on GBV) will work in collaboration with SASA! implementation staff to strengthen the Ministry's own capacity to be a leader and ally in shaping social and gender norms. The component will finance participation and training of institutional leaders within MGCSP and selected employees in a variety of sequential activities for strengthening the institution's operational culture, protocols, guidelines, and daily practices as they relate to gender—increasing the institution's capacity to prevent and respond to GBV and to play a leadership

³⁶ Abramsky, T. et al. (2014). *Findings from the SASA! Study*.

³⁷ The SASA! approach as designed is intended to target GBV, specifically IPV. Component 2.b below similarly focuses on promoting positive social and gender norms among adolescents, using a school-driven model with the objective of keeping girls in school and delaying early marriage and pregnancy. The SASA! adaptation process, which will take place with an accredited SASA! Technical Assistance provider and the Service Provider Consortium (see *Implementation Arrangements*), will also explore further linkages between the two components.

³⁸ The descriptions of the SASA! approach included here are drawn from the *Raising Voices SASA!* materials, which are available here: <https://raisingvoices.org/women/the-sasa-approach/sasa-together/>. The original methodology has been updated based on lessons learned in the first decade of implementation; the new approach in use since 2020 is called *SASA Together*.



role in influencing norms. These activities will take place with MGCSP staff at the national and county/local level.

35. The Lead Service Provider contracted for implementation will ensure that at least one service provider/NGO has experience and will be responsible for adapting SASA! to the local context, and incorporating lessons learned from SASA! implementation in rural and peri-urban settings in Liberia and the region.³⁹ This service provider with GBV prevention/response experience will also be responsible for training community activists, leaders and institutional allies in each of the approximately 750 communities targeted, and guiding them through the SASA! phases over the two-three year period of implementation. They will also be responsible to ensure that the SASA! results framework is implemented (see Results Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements below). The SASA! adaptation process will also consider stressors happening at the community level related to climate events, including potential for increased GBV that may be occurring as agricultural livelihoods are threatened. Given the sensitivity involved in engagement on issues of social norms and violence at community level, the project will fully incorporate SASA!'s harm mitigation strategies to address the risks of community backlash or increased violence against women that could result (see *Environmental and Social Risks* for more information).

Subcomponent 1.b: Strengthening community mobilization and citizen engagement (US\$2.0 million equivalent)

36. While SASA! is more focused on IPV prevention, this subcomponent will finance broad mobilization, sensitization, and SBCC activities which will anchor all other project components, including those focused on livelihoods and economic/social empowerment. Therefore, this subcomponent will finance (i) communication campaigns designed on the county level and implemented in each of the targeted communities to create a supportive environment of the project and to disseminate information about project activities, especially the access to economic and social services under components 2 and 3, and general information about resilience and adaptation to climate and other potential shocks; (ii) identifying a series of mobilization activities to support women's participation in groups (to lay the groundwork for component 3's livelihoods and economic/social empowerment activities); (iii) mapping of existing groups (including community/saving groups, associations, etc.); (iv) engagement with religious and/or traditional leaders for brainstorming sessions to support women's participation in the project activities (a protocol for which will be outlined in the Project Implementation Manual for implementation by the Service Provider); (v) capacity building of influential/trusted women in each community who work for the promotion of women's concerns; (vi) leadership programs targeting women and girls to strengthen their civic participation in local development processes; and (vii) strengthening the local Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM), including ensuring survivor-centered processes for GBV survivors. While subcomponents 1.a and 1.b have a different focus, it is expected that the same service provider can implement both subcomponents to ensure coordination, synergy and avoid duplication. Activities under this subcomponent will also include a focus on community-driven adaptation measures such as, increased awareness to climate-resilient crops and improved land management in the face of floods and droughts, to strengthen community resilience to climate shocks (See Annex 2 on Gender and Climate).

³⁹ SASA! has been implemented on a small scale by a local Liberian NGO, with the support of *Raising Voices*, the Uganda-based NGO that originated the program and provides Technical Assistance for its implementation. SASA! has also been embedded into the International Rescue Committee's women's and child protection and empowerment portfolio in Liberia, specifically through the Irish Aid-funded *Raising Community Voices* and *She Leads* projects. The IRC's SASA! activities were complemented in Liberia by its combined economic and social empowerment approach ("EASE").



Component 2: Enhancing basic services in health and education (US\$5.4 million equivalent)

37. Component 2 will finance activities to address key barriers to health and education for women and girls, specifically local GBV response and ASRH services as well as school-driven community engagement on adolescent pregnancy, early marriage and keeping girls in school. The component will finance studies to develop approaches in each sector which will then be piloted. Study findings may lead to recommendations for further investment.

Subcomponent 2.a: Increase service-seeking behavior for health services at community level (US\$2.1 million equivalent)

38. This subcomponent will fund the enhancement of basic GBV response services at the local level in the target counties, with the objective of developing a model for improved support to survivors of GBV in settings where access to One Stop Centers or other government healthcare providers is impractical. The proposed model will operate at two levels: at the *facility level* (selected health facilities), the project will fund the development and implementation of a “GBV core concepts” training curricula on integrating basic GBV health and psychosocial care into routine service delivery, including psychological first aid, basic clinical best practices, survivor-centered care, and the referral pathway. The curricula will also include modules that are specific to caring for survivors of IPV, to reinforce the project’s SASA! activities under subcomponent 1.a. At the *community level*, the project will fund the development and implementation of a similar “GBV core concepts” training curricula to be used with existing community structures already active in GBV prevention and response, such as women’s groups and local community-based organizations. The curricula will include similar topics and will focus on enabling these organizations to carry out their work more efficiently, and to strengthen linkages between these organizations and health facilities and other service providers (i.e., strengthening the referral pathway). The project will first fund a study to assess facility readiness to deliver GBV response services and to develop the details and potential for scale-up of the model.⁴⁰

39. This subcomponent will also fund the development and implementation of a pilot initiative on core competencies for adolescent-friendly service delivery and ASRH at both community- and facility-level, for potential scale-up. As with GBV services, this activity will address critical ASRH service delivery gaps at the local level, generate demand for services by addressing myths and misconceptions around ASRH and contraception, and advance early pregnancy prevention efforts. The subcomponent will also fund a study on facility readiness and potential for scale-up (to be combined with the study on GBV services above). It will also explore (for potential funding through future initiatives) the effectiveness of combining ASRH and economic empowerment programming, a model supported by multiple development partners in Liberia including United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) with promising results.

40. Financing improvements to basic GBV services aligns with best practices for implementation of SASA! and other methods for shifting social norms (Component 1), which can increase reporting and demand for GBV services as they promote discussion of gender and power dynamics within communities and households. Strengthening services will also mitigate the risks of household-level backlash from male

⁴⁰ While the scope of the component is limited to the delivery of the “GBV Core Concepts” curricula, the project will also ensure that project-related risks of GBV, sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH) are adequately managed (see *Environmental and Social Risks* below). This means that the project will provide funds (through the Service Provider Consortium), to ensure that survivors receive a minimum package of GBV services for incidents of GBV, SEA and SH that are reported through the project Grievance Redress Mechanism.



partners to the project's range of empowerment initiatives (see *Environmental and Social Risks* below). Learnings from recent *SASA!* programming also highlight the importance of linkages to institutions, including GBV service providers. This subcomponent will thus bridge critical gaps between social norms initiatives, GBV prevention and GBV response mechanisms.

Subcomponent 2.b: Shifting social norms to keep girls in school (US\$3.3 million equivalent)

41. This subcomponent will pilot a school-driven, community-based model to promote positive social norms and behavioral change. It aims to build positive norms related to educating girls and women and delaying marriage and pregnancy. As compared to Component 1 (which addresses social norms that relate to GBV/IPV), subcomponent 2.b will target norms related to girls' education and associated issues of early marriage and adolescent pregnancy. This subcomponent is closely linked to IRISE (P164932). It will reinforce that project's support to girls' scholarships and female guidance counselors in secondary schools.

42. This subcomponent will finance a series of activities including, promoting community engagement to empower girls, schools, and communities; conducting an analysis on the major constraints faced by girls in attending secondary school and disseminating findings; designing and implementing a pilot program of community dialogue and school-driven community engagement campaigns which will engage students, parents, community leaders (traditional and religious); and existing school-related structures such as school health clubs in dialogue around the positive impacts of investing in girls' education and delayed marriage and pregnancy. This subcomponent will be closely linked to Component 1's social norms interventions that use the *SASA!* model to address GBV/IPV, but will be focused on norms and issues that relate to adolescents. The project will build on lessons learned from comparable interventions, in particular *SASA!* adaptations focused on girls in schools (e.g., *Power to Girls*), the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD, P150080) project (particularly the SWEDD project's promising approaches to fostering girls' enrollment and delaying marriage), as well as interventions in Liberia including the *Girls Empower* program. The analysis on major constraints faced by girls will include an analysis of FGM/C, including a survey of methodologies currently in use to address FGM/C (including under the UN's Spotlight Initiative program), and will also integrate an analysis on the impact of the climate crisis on girls' education, specifically if climate-related events are preventing adolescent girls from learning and remaining in school. In coordination with the ASRH study and activities under subcomponent 2.a, the project will also study (for potential funding through future initiatives) combined economic empowerment and ASRH/social norms initiatives focused on adolescent girls that have a track record in Liberia and will explore non-farm livelihood opportunities to support the transition away from climate-sensitive sectors.

43. The Lead Service Provider of the consortium will ensure that Component 2 is implemented by one or more service providers with expertise in ASRH and GBV prevention and response. This may be the same service provider as subcomponent 1.a, given the close linkages between GBV/IPV prevention, social norms and GBV response. In addition, subcomponents 2.a and 2.b will be implemented in coordination with MoH and MoE, respectively. The Lead Service Provider may also engage one or more technical consultants to conduct the relevant studies on GBV/ASRH facility readiness (subcomponent 2.a) and the analysis of constraints faced by girls attending secondary school (subcomponent 2.b), and to propose methodologies for both pilots to be implemented by a service provider. In conducting these analyses and implementing the component, the consortium will coordinate with the Spotlight Initiative, the joint UN program with activities on GBV prevention and response and will incorporate lessons learned from this initiative into the pilots, as well as from initiatives that have worked effectively on adolescent girls empowerment (see Rationale for World Bank Involvement and Role of Partners below).



Component 3: Promoting resilient livelihoods through community-led approaches (US\$23.6 million equivalent)

44. This component will finance climate-resilient livelihood support to different categories of women groups and entrepreneurs by carrying out a program of activities for economic and social empowerment of women using livelihood group platform to deliver life skills and gender training and dialogue to build agency, address GBV, and strengthen resilience of women's livelihoods. Using the phased approach of the project, the activities of this component will be implemented in the same communities and concurrently as components 1 and 2 to benefit from the integrated approach. By addressing community-level norms (Component 1) alongside support to individual women through improved services (Component 2) and resilient livelihoods (Component 3), the project will increase the likelihood that women will be able to exercise agency and control over the assets they generate through the project. Given that most livelihood activities will be focused in the agriculture sector, this component benefited from extensive consultations with MoA. Therefore, this component will finance:

Subcomponent 3.a: Capacity building of resilient livelihoods groups (US\$5.6 million equivalent)

45. Building on the community mobilization and the mapping of existing community groups, associations and grassroots women entrepreneurs carried out under subcomponent 1.b, this subcomponent will target women's groups and entrepreneurs to support livelihoods through provision of need-based differentiated support, including life skills, business development services, and access to digital banking services to eligible women community groups, women associations, and women entrepreneurs. The subcomponent will finance (i) support to existing community groups (saving groups that are led by women, including mixed-gender groups with a higher percentage of women, or support the formation of groups; (ii) support for existing associations that are already operational and need additional capacity building; and (iii) support for existing women entrepreneurs who have a record of leading enterprises in target communities. These three categories of beneficiaries will receive need-based differentiated support which will include life skills, business development services, and support to access digital banking services. The project will provide livelihood grants to the community groups as part of subcomponent 3b. The associations and women entrepreneurs, which are at a more advanced stage compared to community groups, will receive the social and economic packages and will be linked to financial institutions and community revolving funds to access finance to scale up their livelihood activities. Under this subcomponent, climate-smart activities will consist of a climate-sensitive market assessment, climate-informed business plans, climate awareness training modules, and activities to build a cadre of climate community champions (See Annex 2 on Gender and Climate). More specifically, this subcomponent will finance:

- *Strengthening group norms and capacities.* Having identified the various groups, targeted activities will be conducted to strengthen group norms. If new groups need to be developed, there will be targeted activities to do so. Working on group norms will entail training and participating in a set of five core group principles: regular meetings, regular savings, inter-loaning, timely repayment, and recordkeeping. The groups will be federated at the community level. Furthermore, dialogue sessions will be conducted with these groups to identify challenges faced by existing women's groups, their adaptation to shocks (e.g., climate and pandemic), and opportunities to grow female-led and female dominant livelihood groups.



- *Delivering a package of social and life skills.* As part of the project's capacity-building for women's groups and entrepreneurs, the project will fund a package of social and life skills intended to build women's agency, confidence, and to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the livelihoods activities. Training topics will include literacy, business management and financial literacy, as well as group management, leadership, decision-making, communication, negotiation, and climate change awareness. Based on lessons learned from similar combined economic and social empowerment projects in Liberia,⁴¹ the social package will include a focus on non-cognitive skills, social and emotional learning and self-efficacy to build agency. The life skills package under this component, which focuses on individual women's agency, will complement the community-wide approach to social norms under Component 1 with a focus on individual needs (as compared to the community-level prevention in Component 1).
- *Gendered and climate-sensitive market assessment and business plans.* In parallel with the above activities, a gendered and climate-sensitive market assessment will be carried out in the implementing counties to inform a menu of viable farm and non-farm livelihood options taking into consideration climate risks in the target areas, climate resilient livelihoods approaches that have been implemented, and potential opportunities to strengthen women's resilience to future shocks. The menu of activities developed under this component will be consulted with the different category of women's groups and entrepreneurs.
- *Mentoring and support for business plan development and implementation.* Once the menus for resilient livelihoods are agreed upon, technical support will be provided to community groups to select their business activities and develop a business plan for implementation. Technical support will also be provided to develop a business plan to improve and expand their business activities. The preparation of climate-informed business plans will involve a social, environmental, and a participatory climate risk assessment process. Support will also be provided to each group to support the implementation of their plans and scale up activities. The business development and mentoring support for the various groups and women entrepreneurs will include creating linkages with extension services and agriculture projects, as well as inputs suppliers and market players. It will also involve facilitating access to digital financial services to improve community level business activities, access to finance, and drive local entrepreneurship.

46. Furthermore, this component will finance critical activities needed for the sustainability and improvement of livelihoods activities for women which include (i) linkages to financial institutions and community revolving funds, and (ii) mapping of livelihood programs of other donors to provide potential opportunities and networks for these different beneficiaries. At the mid-term review of the project, a roadmap for strengthening women's economic empowerment ecosystem on the county level will be developed to ensure sustainability and scalability of activities including engagement in the opportunities of other donors and assistance to start building networks. This will help women in groups, associations as well as entrepreneurs in the target communities to transition from limited power, voice, and choice at home and in the local economies to having the skills, resources and opportunities needed to compete equitably in markets as well as the agency to control and benefit from economic gains.

Subcomponent 3.b: Supporting grants for women-led livelihoods (US\$18.0 million equivalent)

47. This subcomponent will finance provision of one-time livelihood grants to the community groups, social and economic packages to women's associations and entrepreneurs to implement eligible business

⁴¹ Including the International Rescue Committee's *EASE* model ("Economic and Social Empowerment"), now also implemented by Plan International.



plans. This will be done through grants for the business plans developed, consulted, and screened for climate risks, discussed above. Once business plans are developed, they will be submitted to request livelihood grants. Each group can submit a proposal on a sliding scale up to US\$5,000. The business plans will be required to show a detailed outline of project activities, costing, partners, and adaptation measures to face climate risks. The livelihoods grants will be managed by the NGO/not-for-profit organization hired under the project, under the leadership of the MGCSP. Upon approval of the business plans, community groups will be supported to open a bank account. After opening bank accounts, the community groups will receive training in financial management (FM). After that, the grants will be transferred to group bank accounts. Details of requirements for grants submission of the different groups will be elaborated in the Project Implementation Manual (PIM). The grant mechanisms will be aligned with similar approaches under the World Bank-financed RETRAP (P175263) and STAR-P (P160945), implemented by the MoA. As grants are being administered in the first two-three years of implementation, linkages with financial institutions and community revolving funds will be established to give the community groups an opportunity to complement their grants with loans and allow them to access finance to scale up their activities after mid-term of the project. Under this subcomponent, all the grants provided to community groups will support business activities that are climate-informed, with identified mitigation and/or adaptation measures based on the climate risk assessment. The subcomponent will allocate 60 percent of total livelihood grants financing to climate investments and 80 percent of activities funded under the climate-informed business plans will support climate resilient/climate-smart agricultural investments. (See Annex 2 on Gender and Climate).

48. As with the other community-focused Components (1 and 2), the Lead Service Provider of the consortium will ensure sufficient expertise to implement the women's economic/social empowerment and rural livelihoods activities under Component 3. The component will also be implemented in coordination with national- and county-level government actors from MGCSP and MoA to build their capacity for providing livelihoods support. The implementation of Component 3 will also be closely related to Component 1 and 2, particularly community mobilization under subcomponent 1.b.

49. Exclusion list. Any activity that would require resettlement constitute the exclusion list that will not be financed by this project

Component 4: Strengthening public institutions to advance gender equality (US\$4 million equivalent)

50. Component 4 will build the capacity of MGCSP and MoA to generate data and address gender gaps by building out the gender infrastructure. The component will also fund a platform for policy dialogue and coordination with other Ministries with a mandate on gender inclusion. Component 4 will thus contribute to the project's long-term impact on women's empowerment and sustainability, enhancing GoL capacity to deliver both policies and services addressing economic and social needs. Particular focus will be paid to enhancing capacity to generate and use sex-disaggregated data as a starting point for informed decision making on policy, budgets and activities, and on laying the groundwork for GoL investments in staffing needs. Closing the gap on sex-disaggregated data is also critical for further analysis of the consequences of



climate change on women, and the inclusion of women in decision-making process for climate change adaptation and mitigation.⁴²

Subcomponent 4.a. Build the gender infrastructure in MGCSP and MoA (US\$3.5 million equivalent)

51. This subcomponent will cover capacity-building activities for MGCSP and MoA. MGCSP activities were selected based on discussion to align with the objectives of the MGCSP Strategic Plan (2021-2023) and Needs Assessment (2021); MoA activities were similarly selected in consultation with the Ministry's lead gender actors. Efforts will be made to ensure that Ministry staff at county level benefit from capacity-building and support under this component.

- **MGCSP Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) Systems: MEAL assessment and three-year plan.** This subcomponent will finance support to the Ministry's MEAL systems, including their roll-out to MGCSP staff at the county level. Current M&E systems within MGCSP are rudimentary. The Ministry has fewer than five permanent staff, although progress has been made in the development of computer-based Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) and social registry (through the Liberia Social Safety Nets Project, P155293), with preliminary plans for further expansion of cloud-based data storage across Ministry functions. Capacity to track, monitor and confirm reporting of Ministry activities and develop quality sex-disaggregated data is limited, as is the use of data to inform policies, programs and budgets. LWEF will build on previous efforts to strengthen MGCSP MEAL systems⁴³ by building the capacity of MGCSP to track, monitor and confirm reporting of its activities and develop quality sex-disaggregated data. LWEF will also fund an assessment of MEAL and sex-disaggregated data generation capacity to determine the priority system improvements for the Ministry. Based on this assessment, the project will fund the development and implementation of a three-year strategy and capacity-building plan addressing monitoring and evaluation, knowledge and learning, and data generation. Through the three-year strategy and plan, the project will fund (i) the development of user-friendly MEAL and data collection tools and information management systems aligned with existing improvements (including hardware/software where necessary); (ii) a roll-out period of training for staff on use of new tools (including onboarding training modules developed for future new staff); (iii) a strategy and protocol for linking sex-disaggregated data to the Department of Research, Policy and Planning and resource mobilization activities (for better linkages to policy and program formation); and (iv) where needed, basic IT (Information Technology) infrastructure (computers, tablets, connectivity solutions, etc.).
- **Women's Empowerment and Human Resources Capacity Development.** The project will fund activities to lay the groundwork for enhanced capacity of Ministry staff, particularly the Division of Women Empowerment within the Department of Gender. During project preparation, MGCSP has prioritized the engagement of a Director of the Division. The project will provide targeted support to this Division including assisting with the development of a Strategic Plan and support for implementation. The project will also finance a broader review of staffing and skill needs within MGCSP, a process that has not taken place since

⁴² Data-Pop Alliance, UN Women, MGCSP (2021). *Liberia Country Gender Equality Profile*. <https://datapopalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Report-UNW-liberia.pdf>.

⁴³ Investments in M&E have been made under the Second Phase of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security with the support of UN Women. However, NAP WPS is an inter-ministerial Action Plan under the authority of the President, and while it has included and provided support to MGCSP and M&E staff, it is not directly related to MGCSP's core work.



reforms in 2016, and the development of an action plan to address those skills to include capacity-building for staff at county level.

- Resource Mobilization. In line with the MGCSP Strategic Plan which identifies it as a priority objective, the project will finance a resource mobilization strategic plan, with a focus on the development of linkages to sex-disaggregated data generation and gender responsive planning and budgeting (GRPB), in coordination with MFDP (which leads the GRPB process for GoL). The project will also fund targeted activities in the proposed workplan, including a workshop on best practices for reviewing funding/project proposals (a key identified gap) and best practices for GRPB.
- GoL Program Development. Given the long-term prospect of women's empowerment in Liberia, which will require sustained engagement across multiple sectors and involving a wide range of government and non-government actors at the national and local level, the project will also take steps to lay the groundwork for long-term work on empowerment. This subcomponent will provide support to GoL for the development of a national government program on empowerment and addressing gender gaps, with the long-term goal of inclusion of the program in the government budget. This activity will fund a consultant to study regional and global best practices for inclusion of gender equality initiatives in government programs, the development and dissemination of a proposed strategy, and stakeholder engagement on the issue. This activity will be phased and will begin after the first two years of implementation, in order to capture lessons learned from other project activities including the institutional capacity taking place under this subcomponent.

Gender and Social Development in the MoA

52. The project will provide targeted support to the Gender and Social Development Unit of MoA to strengthen its function in addressing gender gaps in agricultural production, processing, and marketing and to enable it to take a leading role in guiding MoA, the Cooperative Development Agency, and other Ministry, Department, and Agencies (MDAs) active in the agricultural sector on gender inclusion and the needs of women in agriculture. Activities to be funded include the development of an agricultural gender strategy and delivery of resources to empower and equip the Gender Unit (e.g., basic office and IT equipment). The project will also fund a qualitative agricultural survey that will generate sex-disaggregated data that will assist the Ministry in developing strategic priorities and mobilizing resources. Further, dimensions of the agricultural survey will explore gender differentiated access to and use of climate-smart agricultural technologies, as well as awareness of sustainable agriculture and climate-proof agriculture production systems. The project will also support the expansion of sex-disaggregated data collection processes to capture gender differentiated climate-risk metrics, such as women's and men's access to and use of early warning systems.

Subcomponent 4.b: Policy dialogue and coordination (US\$0.5 million equivalent)

53. This subcomponent will finance a national platform for policy dialogue on gender, empowerment and GBV led by MGCSP. Recognizing that addressing the barriers to gender equality and women and girls' empowerment is a long-term prospect, the platform will serve as a forum for cross-sectoral discussion of empowerment and GBV and will engage various ministries that are working to strengthen human capital and economic opportunities for women and girls, including MoE, MoH, MFDP, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labor and others. In the first two-three years, the platform will aim to identify policy reforms needed on the national level to improve gender equality. The Project Steering Committee will be tasked



with establishing this platform under its TORs and will ensure participation of key Ministries. Care will be taken to avoid duplication of existing platforms for coordination on gender and GBV.

Component 5: Project management, monitoring and evaluation (US\$3.6 million equivalent)

Subcomponent 5.a: Project management (US\$2.0 million equivalent)

54. This subcomponent will finance overall project coordination and implementation arrangements at the national and sub-national level including FM, procurement, social and environmental safeguards under the Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) and monitoring and evaluation. The component will finance (as necessary) the strengthening of the Project Management Unit (PMU) that exists within MGCSP (see Implementation Arrangements below, adequate staffing (including the expansion of the existing PMU to include a full cohort of technical staff on women's economic empowerment, GBV and community mobilization for the implementation of LWEF), logistical support and other goods necessary for project implementation.

Subcomponent 5.b: Monitoring and evaluation, knowledge management (US\$1.6 million equivalent)

55. This component will finance M&E activities which will include baseline, midline and endline evaluation surveys, training for participatory monitoring by beneficiaries, a monitoring and evaluation specialist consultant, and final process evaluation. It will also fund knowledge management and an impact evaluation for the project. Given the relatively innovative approach of the project's design, which operationalizes the evidence for what works on a number of critical gender issues within the same project, an impact evaluation will be conducted to measure the efficacy of the approach. The impact evaluation will also address key questions, including which specific activities were most helpful to beneficiaries; the impact of combining social norms change and economic/social empowerment approaches; and the different program impacts for women, girls and the other community members. The impact evaluation will be designed in collaboration with key project stakeholders at the national and local level.

Component 6: Contingent Emergency Response Component (US\$0.0 million)

56. Under the CERC, in the event of an eligible crisis or emergency, funds may be reallocated from other components of the project. This component, if activated, would finance rapid response measures and early recovery activities to address disaster, emergency and/or catastrophic events. This would be achieved by providing a set of activities following simplified procedures set out in a special project Contingent Emergency Response (CER) Manual. Applicable national and World Bank emergency response procedures for procurement and disbursements would be applied. The acceptance by the World Bank of the CER Manual would be a condition of disbursement under this component.

C. Project Beneficiaries

57. The project is expected to operate in six climate-vulnerable counties targeting approximately 267,200 people in approximately 750 communities. The main project beneficiaries are: All members of the communities in the targeted areas, who will benefit from activities to shift social norms related to GBV/IPV as well as overall community mobilization under Component 1; Women and girls in communities within the target areas who will benefit from enhanced social services pilots under Component 2 (GBV and ASRH-focused healthcare and school-driven social norms approaches) and climate-resilient livelihoods under Component 3; Government officials and staff at the national, and county and district level who will benefit

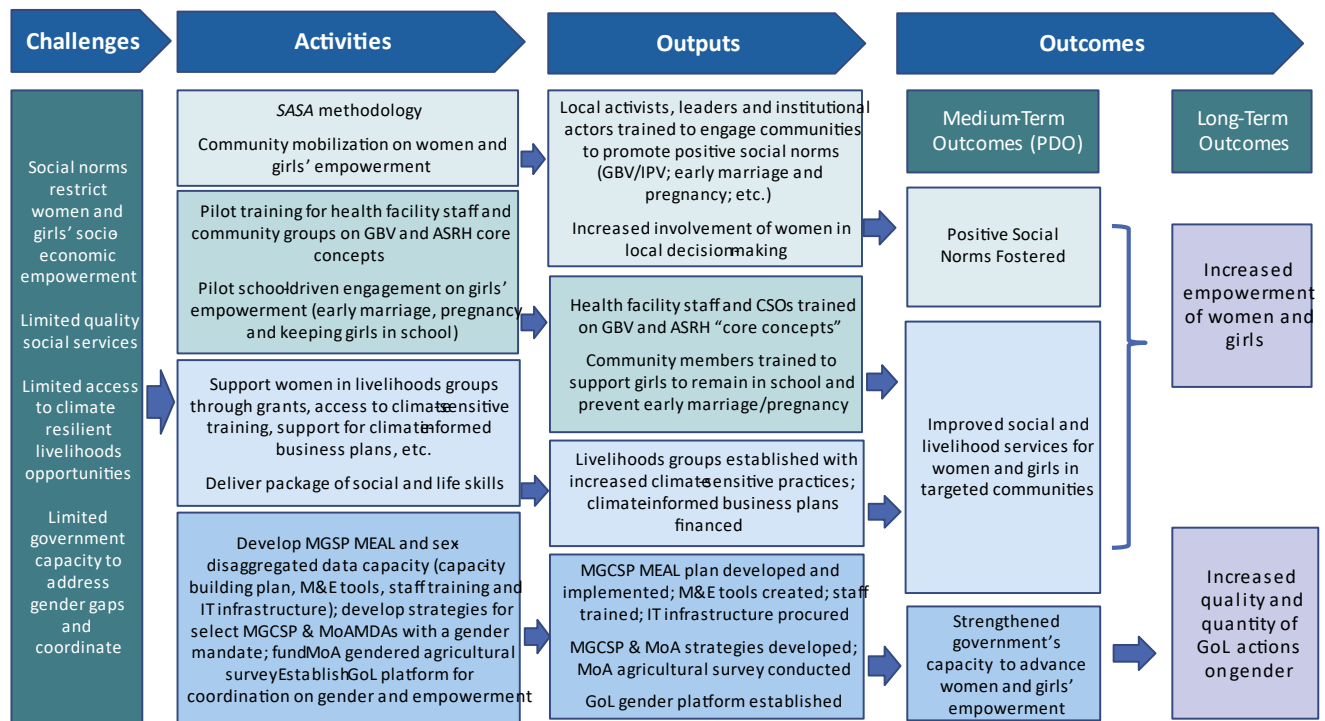


from the institution-focused activities to enhance capacity to address gender gaps and GBV under Component 4, as well as capacity-building for project implementation under Component 5 (these beneficiaries will be in addition to the approximately 267,200 community beneficiaries).

D. Results Chain

58. The project development objective is to improve social and livelihood services for women and girls in targeted communities, foster positive social norms and strengthen the government's capacity to advance women and girls' empowerment.

Figure 2: Theory of Change



Critical assumption: low capacity of Government for implementation



E. Rationale for World Bank Involvement and Role of Partners

59. **The World Bank is well positioned to support the Government to address interrelated barriers to gender equality over the long term.** Addressing gender equality is a long-term prospect that will require intensive multi-sectoral engagement that the World Bank is well-placed to support, given the wide range of technical expertise available and the World Bank's established government relationships in key sectors. Numerous projects have provided broad-based investments in economic development, agriculture, climate resilience, healthcare, education, social protection, governance and other relevant sectors. LWEP will leverage these experiences and relationships to deliver a multisectoral initiative that directly targets gender gaps and women's empowerment.

60. **Role of partners.** The project's design will also be implemented in coordination with key partners in Liberia and the region. There is strong support among development partners for addressing gender attitudes, beliefs, and norms as a central part of the empowerment effort, and for combined initiatives that address both norms and the economic and social needs of women and girls. LWEP will be implemented in close coordination with key development partners listed in the table below.

Table 2: Role of Partners

Actor	Role in Women's Empowerment and GBV Prevention/Response	Alignment with LWEP
UN Agencies and the Spotlight Initiative (joint UN program on GBV prevention and response): UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA and others European Union (Spotlight Funder)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support GBV prevention through Spotlight, specifically a Comprehensive SGBV Prevention Strategy (led by UNICEF). UN agencies including UN Women and UNFPA are key partners in a range of other GBV initiatives including legislative advocacy, FGM/C efforts, support for GBV services UN Women, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and WFP have supported rural women's economic empowerment/livelihoods through a joint program UNFPA supports adolescent girls' empowerment initiatives 	<p>LWEP approach is fully aligned with the principles and approaches of the Spotlight Comprehensive SGBV Prevention Strategy, and the project's support for community-level GBV services builds on support to more centralized service providers like One Stop Centers</p> <p>LWEP's economic empowerment and adolescent-focused initiatives will build on lessons learned from UN Women and UNFPA programs</p>
Embassy of Sweden/SIDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funded research on social and gender norms, and plans future investments in media-based programming on norms, GBV, Sexual and Reproductive Health and social cohesion, as well as investments in GBV service delivery and the gender infrastructure Adolescent empowerment/contraception initiatives 	LWEP's community-based activities on social norms will complement media-based strategies (where they overlap); LWEP focuses on GBV training at community level as complement to investments in operational costs.
Embassy of Ireland/Irish Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funds SASA!, women's economic and social empowerment (e.g., EAŞE model), and male engagement strategies to address social norms and prevent GBV through NGOs International Rescue Committee (IRC), PLAN International. 	LWEP will scale up SASA! implementation and build on lessons learned from SASA! and EAŞE
ActionAid, Plan International, Oxfam, IRC, Medica Liberia, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International NGOs deliver (or have delivered in the past) a number of social norms GBV prevention initiatives, including SASA! and male engagement strategies, as well as economic activities. 	LWEP will scale up SASA! implementation and build on lessons learned from SASA! and EAŞE



F. Lessons Learned and Reflected in the Project Design

61. **The project's focus on the economic, social and institutional dimensions of empowerment is based on growing evidence that intersectional barriers require a multi-faceted approach.** A recent survey of 44 economic empowerment studies in West Africa found that “[s]ingular interventions often do not benefit women who face intersecting barriers because of poverty status, lack of education, and other factors—a bundled approach is more likely to be impactful.”⁴⁴ Similarly, experience in World Bank-financed projects, such as the SWEDD project (P150080) has shown that women’s economic empowerment programs more effectively bridge gender gaps when they seek outcomes beyond short-term changes to women’s employment status and earnings, and encompass changes to social conditions and the enabling environment.⁴⁵ Changes to institutions and norms are also necessary to create the organizational and social systems that promote, rather than inhibit, women’s full and equal participation.⁴⁶

62. **Groups are an effective avenue for both social and economic support to women and have a track record in Liberia.** Recent impact evaluations show that interventions that support livelihoods/credit groups have had positive impact on women’s decision-making, participation in the labor market and wellbeing, attributed to the integrated packages that are often offered. Lessons learned in World Bank-financed operations (and from government and international NGO experience in Liberia) have also found that empowerment efforts centered on groups—including cooperatives, associations and credit groups—can be particularly effective in creating social capital and increases women’s voice and autonomy in economic decision-making.⁴⁷ In Liberia specifically, groups have been found to be effective in rural and under-resourced areas, providing critical peer mentorship and building up resistance to shocks while providing a forum to build social and emotional skills.⁴⁸

63. **Combined economic and social interventions are also a promising approach to preventing GBV.** Projects that combine group-based economic support to women with gender-transformative trainings aimed at addressing gender and power in relationships have been shown to prevent some forms of GBV (specifically IPV), improve gender attitudes and enhance household communication and mental health—while improving women’s economic position.⁴⁹ Similar approaches have been used to strengthen women’s participation in the agriculture sector, while enhancing agency and household decision-making in several countries in sub-Saharan Africa. A combined approach that includes GBV prevention has also been used on a small scale in Liberia through International Rescue Committee’s *EA\$E* activities, which combines economic support (through Village Savings and Loans Associations, business skills, and other training) with targeted gender discussion groups for women and their male partners.

64. **Addressing social norms will be critical to women’s empowerment in Liberia, but this requires sustained, structured engagement and a focus on what works.** Recent analytical work in Liberia⁵⁰ identifies discriminatory social and gender norms as a critical constraint alongside low levels of human capital and limited economic opportunity. However, shifting social norms is a long-term prospect. The project will take an incremental approach, focusing initially on the norms that drive GBV and evidence-based methods, including the *SASA!* approach. Evidence shows that effective methods go beyond awareness-raising to incorporate self-reflection, participation and critical thinking among community members. A recent review of what works in GBV prevention emphasizes that effective work on gender norms should combine “behavior change communication activities, which are not generally effective on



their own, with opportunities for interpersonal communication, skills-building, and changes in thinking through structured participatory approaches and critical reflection.”⁵¹

III. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

A. Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

65. **The institutional and implementation arrangements will be developed at the national, county and community levels using the following principles:** (i) build institutional capacity by supporting existing government systems and mechanisms that have proven to be effective for approaches of similar projects; (ii) utilize a consortium of service providers (NGOs and/or not-for-profit organizations) headed by a Lead Organization for implementation of Components 1, 2, and 3 in coordination with government actors; (iii) ensure presence at the county and community levels to enable capacity building of local MGCSP and other government structures and support for implementation; and (iv) support national coordination for the project’s multisector approach by engaging relevant government agencies in project implementation and supervision.

On the national level:

66. **Project Steering Committee (PSC).** A PSC will be established co-chaired by MFDP and MGCSP and will include focal points from key Ministries including MoA, MoE, MoH. The PSC will be established to provide strategic oversight, review annual work plans and budgets, monitor and evaluate implementation status, and conduct general project supervision meetings on a bi-annual basis, as well as other tasks to be agreed upon between the PSC members per Terms of Reference (TOR) that will be elaborated in the PIM. The PSC will also oversee the establishment of the gender platform for policy dialogue under subcomponent 4.b, the process of which will also be outlined in the TORs.

67. **Project Management Unit (PMU).** MGCSP is the Implementing Agency for the project, and the project will utilize, expand and strengthen the existing MGCSP PMU that is implementing the Liberia Social Safety Nets Project (P155293). LWEP will competitively engage its own technical staff for project coordination, as well as FM and procurement staff. For more efficient project start-up, LWEP will use

⁴⁴ Buvinic, M., O'Donnell, M., Bourgault, S. (2020). *Women's Economic Empowerment in West Africa: Towards a Practical Research Agenda*. CDG Working Paper 584. Washington, D.C.: Center for Global Development.

⁴⁵ See, e.g., World Bank (2017). *Women and the Economy: Lessons Learned on Operational Approaches to Women's Economic Empowerment in Afghanistan*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

⁴⁶ ICRW (2011). *Understanding and Measuring Women's Economic Empowerment*.

⁴⁷ World Bank (2017).

⁴⁸ Lesson learned from stakeholder consultations with International Rescue Committee (2021).

⁴⁹ Gibbs, A., and Bishop, K. (2019). *Preventing violence against women and girls: combined economic empowerment and gender transformative interventions. Evidence Review*. What Works to Prevent Violence Program, UKaid. Kerr-Wilson, A. et al. (2020). *A rigorous global evidence review of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls*. What Works to prevent violence among women and girls global Programme, Pretoria, South Africa.

⁵⁰ Cunningham, et. al (forthcoming); see also Nilsson, M., et al (2019). *The challenge of unlearning: A study of gender norms and masculinities in Liberia*. Funded by the Embassy of Sweden and UN Women.

⁵¹ Kerr-Wilson, A. et al. (2020). *A rigorous global evidence review of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls*. What Works to prevent violence among women and girls global Programme, Pretoria, South Africa.



project staff who are already familiar with World Bank policies and procedures and will utilize key structures established under the existing project including the GRM. Project-specific technical staff will include a project coordinator, two procurement specialists, a finance officer, an environmental specialist, a social development and gender specialist, and a communication and community engagement specialist. The FM and procurement assessments have been conducted respectively, and the recommendations include the need to hire additional specialized staff for the project.

68. **Technical Committee (TC).** Given the multi-sectoral nature of the project, a TC will be formed of technical focal points from the core Ministries (MGCSP, MoA, MoH, and MoE). The purpose of the TC will not be to oversee or direct the work of the PMU, but rather to provide a forum for discussing implementation issues and solutions to roadblocks and challenges in a multi-sectoral way, and to notify the PSC of actions that may be recommended. Representatives on the TC will be at the Director level, and the core Ministries may hire technical consultants to support the Directors for improved coordination, technical backstopping and capacity-building. The TC will keep the relevant Ministries apprised of the project's activities on a more regular basis than the PSC may meet and will assist in the coordination of county-level staff (although direction of the project will continue to be under the authority of MGCSP through the PMU). The TC will meet every other month during the first year of implementation (frequency may change based on need).

69. **NGO or not-for-profit organization as a lead for a service provider consortium.** The Implementing Agency (MGCSP) will competitively engage an organization to lead a consortium to implement Components 1, 2, and 3 in an integrated fashion. The consortium to be hired under the first year of the project will work under the direction of the PMU. The Lead Service Provider will have a proven track record of managing large projects in Liberia or in other Sub-Saharan countries along with the technical and managerial capacity required to both implement activities and coordinate other service providers, and it will be responsible for contracting these providers and ensuring alignment of technical expertise. In addition to technical and managerial capacity as core requirements, the Lead Service Provider will have an institutionalized local leadership approach in place to systematically build the capacity of local partners and enable sustainability following the World Bank-financed period of implementation. Within the consortium, at least one service provider will be experienced in GBV prevention and response at community level and will be responsible for implementing activities related to social norms under subcomponent 1.a and 2.b (and potentially subcomponent 2.a). At least one service provider will have experience in rural livelihoods support, women's economic empowerment, and/or community-driven development in Liberia; this service provider will be responsible for implementation of Component 3. Other service providers will be included in the consortium as necessary. The makeup of the consortium will be determined based on the expertise available at national and county level and will focus initially on the first phase of the project (rural Montserrado and Gbarpolu counties). This may change as the project footprint expands. The PMU will be responsible for supervising the engagement and performance of the consortium, and each service provider-member of the consortium will be assessed each year against milestones and objectives to ensure effective implementation.

At the county level

70. **Consortium County Coordinators.** Each county where the project is implemented will have a Coordinator from the Consortium who will coordinate activities under Components 1, 2, and 3 and specifically the activities of the service providers. These individuals will coordinate directly with the County Coordinators for MGCSP, MoA, MoE, MoH and any other relevant agencies to ensure smooth

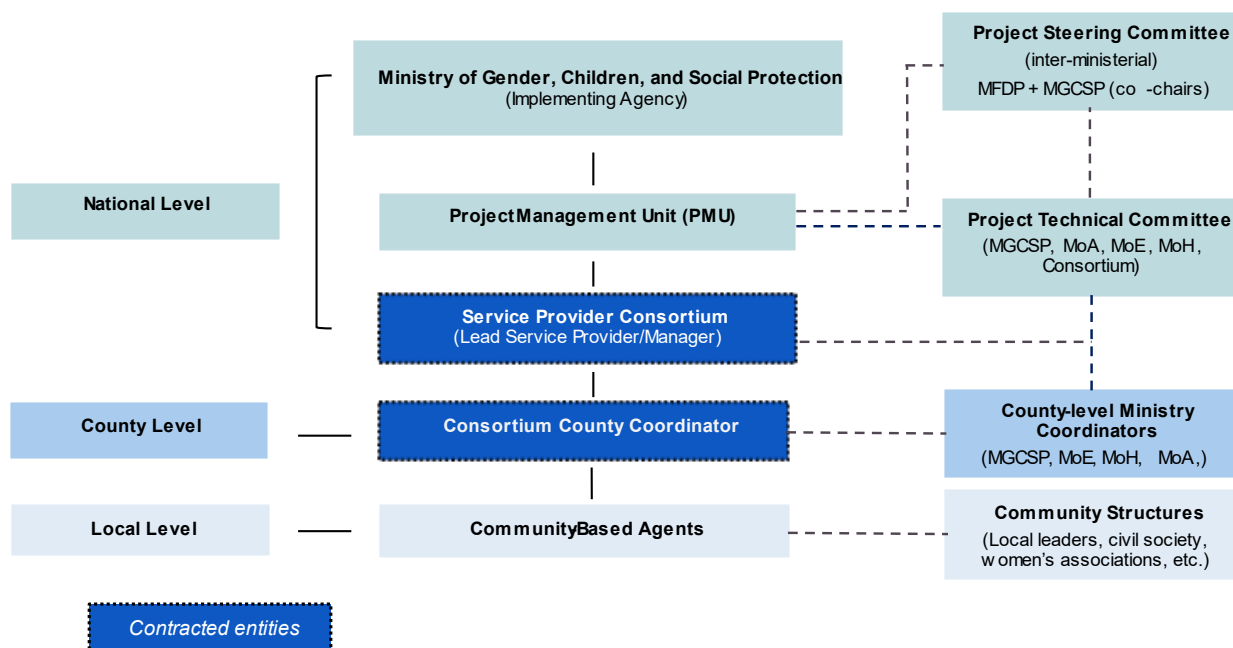


implementation of the project as well as capacity-building opportunities for local government staff.

At the community level

71. **Community Based Agents (CBAs).** As stated under subcomponents 1.b and 3.b, CBAs will be recruited on the community level and trained to provide continuous support to livelihoods activities. CBAs will be trusted community members who have the skills and knowledge to be trained by the service providers recruited under Component 3 in order to ensure business development support to beneficiaries on a sustainable basis.

Figure 3: Proposed Implementation Arrangements





B. Results Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements

72. The M&E system for the project will include timely periodic updates to ensure strategic course correction and accountability throughout project implementation. The PMU and consortium of service providers will be responsible for results monitoring and evaluation and will include a dedicated team of M&E specialists who will monitor and report progress on both, high-level implementation, and county-specific project activities. The Results Framework (RF) will form the basis of the project's M&E work and will guide data collection, aggregation, analysis and reporting annually. The RF will focus on reporting gender-disaggregated results at the community and individual level, wherever possible.

73. In addition to routine project data monitoring, progress will be tracked through rapid assessment surveys conducted twice through the course of the project, at the mid-term (Year 3 results) and the end-term (Year 5 results). These assessments are intended to capture changes in attitudes, perceptions and behaviors of the target beneficiaries, aligned to the indicators in the RF. The assessment surveys will be implemented across all components using a gender-sensitive approach. Social norms and GBV indicators are closely tied to the SASA! Methodology and others have been derived from best practices on gender data monitoring (UN Women, Oxfam etc.), contextualized to the project goals. The progress reports generated using data from project monitoring will document good practices on women's social and economic empowerment and social norms change from harmonization of information generated through the M&E system. Moreover, the SASA! has a dedicated M&E framework which will complement the RF of the project and will be implemented by the Lead Service Provider.

C. Sustainability

74. **The sustainability of the project is anchored in its integrated design that seeks to build capacity at the national and local levels.** One of the key lessons from emerging evidence on women's empowerment from Liberia and elsewhere is that a combined approach (with both economic and social elements) is an effective method to address multi-faceted barriers to gender equality. As a result, the project envisions significant multi-sectoral engagement, with GoL playing a lead convening role through MGCSP and other ministries. The project's focus on building GoL capacity for multi-sectoral engagement will help create a more sustainable and effective presence for GoL, which has traditionally been more fragmented in its gender response.

75. **Institutional sustainability.** The project makes targeted investments to build GoL's capacity to sustain and scale up women's empowerment activities. These investments have been selected in consultation with GoL as a starting point for long-term engagement on Ministry capacity, focusing on (i) generating and using sex-disaggregated data for program and policy decisions; (ii) strategic development of departments that hold a mandate on women's empowerment; and (iii) building capacity for resource mobilization. Further, the Platform developed under subcomponent 4.b is expected to provide a venue for policy discussion beyond the scope of the project.

76. **Social sustainability.** The project's "whole community" approach has been selected with social sustainability in mind. Community mobilization activities and inclusive planning processes for livelihoods, combined with capacity-building activities targeting both women and the community as a whole, are expected to build trust between different groups in society, improve gender equality, support the integration of those who have been excluded or marginalized from decision-making, and build social resilience of people against future shocks (climate, pandemic, conflict). The project will also take a sustainable approach to addressing the norms that drive GBV through the SASA! methodology, which



prioritizes community ownership of the process for the purpose of promoting sustainable outcomes. Communities are meaningfully involved and leading from the beginning, and the final *SASA!* phase is dedicated to “formalizing” change in communities through community-led activities that are specifically focused on maintaining new norms beyond the lifetime of the project.

77. **Economic sustainability.** The project will invest in the economic empowerment of women groups and entrepreneurs. All business plans under Component 3 will be screened for return on investment and economic potentiality. Community business agents will be engaged and trained to ensure business development support to beneficiaries on a sustainable basis. The project will develop a roadmap for strengthening the women’s economic empowerment ecosystem at the county level to ensure the sustainability of activities. This will include facilitating linkages with sources of credit and community revolving funds for additional financing to scale up and sustain livelihood activities. The project will also map livelihood programs of other donors to provide potential opportunities and networks for sustainable support to beneficiaries.

IV. PROJECT APPRAISAL SUMMARY

A. Technical, Economic and Financial Analysis

(i) Technical Analysis

78. **The appraisal of the project confirmed the rationale and technical relevance of the design, its appropriateness to the Borrowers’ needs, and its conformity with international standards.** As presented during appraisal, GoL’s programming on women’s empowerment is centered on improving social and economic outcomes for women as per the PAPD (2018-2023) priorities which is the focus of this project. The appraisal highlighted that the technical design is in line with international evidence on what works for gender equality and follows specific methodology that has showed positive impacts for women’s empowerment. Also, MGSCP underscored the important role of the World Bank to support the implementation of the project and ensure its lessons learned are included in its national scale up.

79. **The prioritized social and economic activities are in line with good practices in Liberia.** Increasingly, GoL and development partners are focusing on the underlying drivers of GBV, to support women’s empowerment. While GBV response services have traditionally received greater attention, prevention of GBV through addressing social norms is a growing focus, including through the development of a Comprehensive Sexual and Gender Based Violence Prevention Strategy under the UN Spotlight Initiative in 2019, and through smaller-scale NGO-led projects that have worked with men, women, boys, girls, and communities on behavioral change (e.g., Oxfam, IRC, Plan International, Medica Liberia, and others). Similarly, the Government and development partners have targeted the drivers of adolescent pregnancy and school dropout, for example through the introduction of “adolescent health clubs” in school communities to address early pregnancy (through MoH with Johns Hopkins University), the *Girls Empower* intervention in Nimba County to equip adolescent girls to make healthy life choices, and UNFPA’s adolescent empowerment initiative in Grand Cape Mount County focused on ASRH, economic opportunities, and social norms. These efforts remain limited in scope and financing, although they have generated helpful activities that are integrated in this project.



80. **As a women's empowerment project, LWEP will address several gender gaps.** First, the project will address GBV, a significant barrier to women's economic, social and human capital development. The project's activities to address this gender gap include evidence-based GBV prevention activities to shift social norms (subcomponent 1.a) and enhancement of local GBV services (subcomponent 2.a) (Indicator: *Men and women supported by the project that believe that IPV is not justified [Percentage]*). The second gender gap addressed is access to socio-economic opportunities, particularly for women in rural areas. The project's activities to address this gender gap include climate-resilient livelihoods support coupled with social and life skills packages for women in project areas (Indicator: *women benefiting from climate-resilient livelihoods activities supported by the project [Number]*). The third gender gap addressed is access to healthcare and education; the project's activities to address this gap will include pilot interventions to enhance local GBV response and ASRH services as well as school-driven community engagement on adolescent pregnancy, early marriage and keeping girls in school (Indicator: *Women and girls benefiting from project-supported facilities (education, GBV, and ASRH) [Percentage]*).

81. **The project integrates Citizen Engagement (CE) throughout the implementation.** Targeted activities including capacity building for CE, participatory decision making, and consultation on gender related norms and behaviors which will be conducted targeting community members, and establishment of a GRM. These CE mechanisms will be monitored through indicators in the RF with results used to inform any needed adjustments or corrective measures during project implementation. The project will provide capacity building for women to enhance their civic participation in local development and climate and disaster risk management processes (indicator: *Women reporting to be actively engaged in community groups (assisting to meeting and benefiting from trainings) supported by the project [Percentage]*). Climate-informed business plans for female livelihood groups will be developed through a participatory decision-making process (indicator: *Climate-informed business plans developed, consulted, and financed through participatory processes [Number]*). The GRM will ensure that queries or clarifications about the project are responded to, problems with implementation are resolved, and complaints and grievances are addressed effectively in a timely manner (indicator: *Grievances registered and addressed within the time specified in the Grievance Redress Mechanism [Percentage]*). Stakeholder consultations will also be carried out at the community level in line with the project Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP).

82. **The project integrates a climate change lens into its activities to address adverse impacts that are barriers for women's empowerment.** Climate change impacts are unevenly distributed, profoundly impacting the livelihoods of women and compounding existing vulnerabilities and inequalities. As women are primarily dependent on climate-sensitive sectors such as subsistence farming and artisanal fishing, extreme climate events like floods and droughts will widen socio-economic disparities, impacting economic productivity and adaptive capability. The project will counter the disproportional burden of climate change on women by centering women's voice, agency, and decision-making autonomy in its climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives.

(ii) Economic Analysis

The expected benefit and cost for each of the components are summarized below.

Social norms and community mobilization

85. **Benefits of the investments to reduce violence against women and girls are expected to be substantial.** The costs of violence against women and girls are enormous. Violence impoverishes not only



individuals, families, communities, and governments, but it also reduces the economic development of the nation. There are three broad categories of costs, in the short and long term: (i) the direct cost of services in relation to violence against women; (ii) the indirect cost of lost employment and productivity; and (iii) the costs of potential loss of future opportunities for women and girls if gender norms persist. Estimates of the costs of violence against women range from 1.78 percent of GDP in Vietnam to 5.548 percent of GDP in Lesotho.⁵² The wide variation in estimates is due to differences in methodologies and data. Still all show significant losses to the overall economy.

86. **An impact evaluation of the SASA! approach found that women in intervention communities were less likely to experience physical or sexual acts of violence perpetrated by an intimate partner in the past year than women in control communities (20 percent versus 33 percent).**⁵³ Injuries were also lower in intervention communities compared with those that did not receive the intervention (15 percent versus 39 percent).

87. **According to the Liberia DHS 2019–2020, 33 percent of women reported having experienced physical violence in the 12 months preceding the survey.**⁵⁴ Therefore, about 469,057 of the total population of Liberian women ages 15–64 (1,421,384) experienced one or more acts of violence in the year preceding the survey. Assuming that the economic cost of violence against women in Liberia is equivalent to 3 percent of GDP, then the cost per incident is about US\$212.

88. **The project aims to reach about 267,200 people with the SASA! approach, of which about 73,000 are women ages 15–64.** If the number of incidents drops to 20 percent in communities benefiting from the project, then the number of incidents will decline by 9,479 per year, and costs to the economy will decline by US\$2,012,450 per year. Using these assumptions, a net present value and internal rate of return have been estimated, as presented in the table below. The benefits significantly exceed the costs under all scenarios.

89. **The main assumptions underlying the analysis are:** (i) SASA! activities start in year 1 of the project; (ii) benefits start to flow from year two and continue for 20 years; (iii) the proportion of women experiencing violence remains stable at 20 percent per year; and (iv) the number of incidents averted rises each year in line with population growth. The project is expected to reach 750 communities with the SASA! approach at a cost of US\$8,000 per community, or a total of US\$6 million.

Table 3: Economic analysis of the benefits of investments in the SASA! approach

	Base case	Scenario 1 (costs up by 10 percent)	Scenario 2 (benefits down by 10 percent)	Scenario 3 (costs up by 10 percent and benefits down by 10 percent)
Net present value	US\$24.6 million	US\$24.1 million	US\$21.6 million	US\$21.0 million
Internal rate of return	36.3 percent	33.2 percent	32.9 percent	30.1 percent

⁵² The Economic Cost of Violence Against Women and Girls. *The Commonwealth*, March 2020

⁵³ Raising Voices, LSHTM and CEDOVIP. 2015. Is Violence Against Women Preventable? Findings from the SASA! Study summarized for general audiences.

⁵⁴ Liberia Demographic and Health Survey 2011-2020



Enhancing basic GBV and ASRH services in health and education

90. **Benefits of the investments in enhancing basic GBV and ASRH services are likely to be significant.** Early medical interventions after incidents of GBV can prevent infections and promote rapid and effective healing. Health services can also provide first-line support/psychological first aid for the survivor and referral to additional services. The project will finance studies and pilots in the areas of GBV survivors and ASRH services and information to quantify the benefits is not currently available.

91. **Benefits of the investments in promoting community engagement to empower girls, schools, and communities is likely to be substantial.** This activity is aimed at closing the gender gap in enrolment and completion of secondary school in the communities benefiting from the engagement. The lifetime income of individuals who complete senior secondary school in Liberia is 18 percent higher than those who complete junior secondary school.⁵⁵ Community engagement is only one activity required to increase girls' enrolment and completion of senior secondary school, and it is not yet known how effective this activity alone will be. Therefore, calculating a net present value and internal rate of return for this activity is not possible at this time.⁵⁶

Promoting resilient livelihoods through community-led approaches

92. **Benefits of the investments to promote resilient livelihoods are expected to be substantial.** Benefits come through five main channels: (i) increased lifetime income for people benefiting from the project; (ii) increased savings, with the amounts saved allowing smoothing of consumption in the face of adverse shocks; (iii) improved children's nutritional status, health, and educational attainment; (iv) improved physical and psychosocial health and overall sense of well-being; and (v) increased social capital. Currently existing data allow only for calculation of the net present value and internal rate of return of increases in income. Other benefits are described qualitatively.

93. **Increased lifetime income for people benefiting from the project.** Some 36,000 people are expected to benefit from the livelihood groups to be established and supported under the project, which will receive training in both business and life skills and access to capital grants to start new or expand existing businesses. An impact evaluation of Uganda's Youth Opportunity Program—which supports livelihood groups similar to the ones to be supported under the LWEP—shows that people benefiting from the livelihood interventions had 38 percent higher incomes than those that did not.⁵⁸ Other studies have shown that beneficiaries of similar interventions increase their incomes of between 10–40 percent.⁵⁹ Another impact evaluation also shows that the positive impacts on income persist over time.⁶⁰ A net present value and internal rate of return have been calculated assuming the livelihood groups result in similar increases in income.

94. A summary of the assumptions used, and findings are below.

- **Costs.** The project is expected to provide US\$18 million in grants to fund establishment or expansion of women-led businesses. An additional US\$2 million will be used to mobilize community

⁵⁵ Data in this section is from the World Bank-financed Liberia IRIS Project's Project Appraisal Document, Report PAD3112, June 11, 2019.

⁵⁶ The IRIS Project estimates the internal rate of return across a range of activities—including community engagement—to be 20 percent.



members into the groups. Another US\$5.6 million will be spent to build the capacity of the groups to operate effectively and sustainably.

- **The main assumptions underlying the analysis are:** (i) livelihood groups are formed during the first year of the project; (ii) grants are disbursed during years 3–5 of the project; and (iii) income of beneficiaries increases by 25 percent within four years of receiving the grant and persists for 20 years.
- **Discount rate.** A discount rate of 5 percent was used, in line with World Bank guidance.

Table 4: Economic analysis of the benefits of investments in resilient livelihoods

	Base case (earnings rise by 25 percent)	Scenario 1 (earnings rise by 22 percent)	Scenario 2 (earnings rise by 19 percent)	Scenario 3 (earnings rise by 16 percent)
Net present value	US\$37.3 million	US\$30.1 million	US\$22.8 million	US\$15.5 million
Internal rate of return	15 percent	14 percent	12 percent	10 percent

B. Fiduciary

(i) Financial Management

95. The Project Fiduciary Management Unit (PFMU) under the MFDP is currently responsible for FM under World Bank- financed projects. The FM functions of the project will be undertaken using the current FM arrangements for the Liberia Social Safety Nets Project (P155293). in the PFMU which are assessed as adequate for ensuring that: (i) the funds are used only for the intended purposes in an efficient and economical way; (ii) accurate, reliable, and timely periodic financial reports are prepared and submitted; and (iii) adequate fiduciary assurances are provided through an independent audit of the project. The PFMU is implementing about 90 percent of the World Bank's and other donor-financed projects in Liberia and the FM capacity developed under these projects is adequate to meet the World Bank's requirements. The PFMU staff is comprised of 24 staff headed by the Director who is a Chartered Accountant, and all of the staff in the PFMU are familiar with World Bank procedures.

96. The control risk is assessed as 'High' and the overall residual FM risk for the project is assessed as 'Substantial.' Proposed risk mitigation measures include, among others: provision of the FM services by the PFMU and Financial Management Officer in the PMU who will also be responsible for coordinating FM activities between the PMU and PFMU and external auditing by an independent qualified auditor. LWEP will be accommodated within the existing FM system at the PFMU. To do this, the PFMU will need to: (i) update the current accounting manual; (ii) customize the existing accounting software to include the account of the new project to generate the interim financial reports (IFRs) and financial statements; and (iii) recruit external auditors.

97. The PFMU will open a Designated Account (DA) in U.S. dollars at a commercial bank agreed to by the World Bank where disbursements will be remitted into. The details of the FM assessment and the financial arrangements can be found in Annex 1.

(ii) Procurement

98. The PMU will assume a coordination role and will be responsible for carrying out procurement



activities for the project. However, the lead organization will implement Components 1, 2, and 3 of the project while the PMU will provide support. All the recruitments of the organizations will conform with World Bank procurement procedures. The lead organization will sub-contract some of the activities to local organizations when required. The lead organization will sign contract with MGCSP. The PMU will also be mandated to (i) coordinate annual work plan; (ii) collate project M&E results; (iii) make sure social and environmental safeguards policies are fulfilled; and (iv) consolidate reports relating to the implementation of the project procurement activities.

99. The World Bank has carried out the required procurement capacity assessment of the implementing agencies and determined the risk to be Substantial. The procurement arrangement for the proposed project will follow the model in other World Bank-financed projects. The implementing agency will carry out all procurement activities under the project in accordance with the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for Investment Project Financing (IPF) Borrowers" (Procurement Regulations) dated November 2020 under the New Procurement Framework, and the "Guidelines on Preventing and Combating Fraud and Corruption in Projects Financed by International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) Loans and International Development Association (IDA) Credits and Grants", dated October 15, 2006, and revised in January 2011 and as of July 1, 2016, and other provisions stipulated in the Financing Agreement. MGCSP is currently implementing a World Bank-financed project, Liberia Social Safety Net Project (LSSN). LWEF will build its procurement implementation arrangement on the foundation already laid by LSSN, by competitively hiring an experienced procurement consultant to take the lead on procurement management of the project and work closely with the procurement unit of the MGCSP. The procurement consultant will have vast experience in World Bank's procurement procedures.

100. With support of the World Bank procurement team, MGCSP has prepared the Project Procurement Strategy for Development (PPSD) for LWEF. The PPCS presents the market analysis which guided preparation of the first eighteen months Procurement Plan. The PPCS as summarized in Annex 1 assisted the project to identify the procurement strategies and methods. The document outlines the procurement risks, weaknesses, and the recommended mitigation measures. In view of the impacts of COVID-19, the PPCS offers flexibilities in the IPF Procurement Regulations to enhance procurement performance during project implementation.

C. Legal Operational Policies

	Triggered?
Projects on International Waterways OP 7.50	No
Projects in Disputed Areas OP 7.60	No

D. Environmental and Social

101. The project activities will finance interventions that support women's economic opportunities with a potential focus on investments to enhance agricultural productivity, value chains and access to markets as well as farms and non-farm livelihood supports to beneficiaries. The activities may result in excessive land clearing and use of pesticides, fertilizers or other agrochemicals that in turn may result in both direct and indirect environmental risks and include; community health and safety, pollution and release of



chemicals and effluent into waterways, land and soil degradation and contamination, management of waste, genetically modified crops, labor related issues, and loss of biodiversity. The irresponsible use of these agrochemicals can lead to potential adverse impacts related to contamination and pollution of water resources and soil, and health impacts for residents of surrounding communities. The use of agrochemicals would also require procurement, transport, storage, and application equipment. Additionally, Greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from production or processing facilities and other equipment could contribute to climate change impacts within the region. However, these risks are expected to be site specific, local, reversible, mainly temporary, and capable of management through appropriate risk mitigation measures as provided in the draft Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) developed by the Borrower. The agricultural activities supported by the project will require site-specific environmental and social screening, in line with the ESMF. The ESMF will be updated on an annual basis and disclosed. The details of how and when will be outlined in the PIM.

102. In terms of social risks, the initial assessment done through the drafts ESMF, and SEP highlights the following risks: (i) exclusion and elite capture of project benefits especially of vulnerable people including persons with disabilities; (ii) increased domestic and economic violence against women; (iii) backlash against women from activities geared to changing long-standing norms and beliefs about gender and power relations, etc. While the project will seek to directly address inequality through its focus on women's economic and social empowerment, these risks remain evident and will require careful attention to the beneficiary identification and selection process, with meaningful participation in the design of the selection process from stakeholders including communities. Although Liberia is cited for high levels of inequality, including gender inequality, interhousehold and cultural dynamics as it relates to this project will require further assessment and management following project effectiveness as stated in the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP). The stakeholder engagement process has begun as shown in the preliminary SEP prepared by the MGCSP but will need to be further deepened following project effectiveness and on-boarding of a project social specialist to lead the process. The beneficiary selection criteria should be clearly stated in the PIM that will be prepared and adopted by project effectiveness.

103. Given Liberia's high rates of GBV incidents, particularly among young and vulnerable women and children, including high rates of exploitative transactional sexual relationships, both the ESMF and ESCP have provided that a detailed GBV Action Plan be developed six months following project effectiveness to further assess and manage risks related to SEA and SH beyond the current context in the draft ESMF. SEA and SH may arise in light of interactions between project staff, workers, consultants and agents of the MGCSP or their contractors and community members. This level of interactions may be significant, given that the project envisions modification of community-based social norm and economic strengthening activities directly with beneficiaries. These interactions may give rise to power imbalances that increase SEA/SH risks. Further, because the project will be directly addressing women's economic and social empowerment with a focus on the social and gender norms that drive inequality and violence, there are risks and implications for women if men (particularly spouses or partners) perceive their traditional roles are threatened. These issues are central not just to the management of risks and impacts but the design of the project itself, and accordingly the proposed gender related and GBV analytical work is expected to inform design for specific project components and subcomponent interventions and taking into account economic, cultural and power dynamics contextual issues.

104. In line with ESF requirements, MGCSP has developed (i) a draft ESMF (which includes LMP, Resettlement Policy Framework [RPF] and Integrated Pest Management Plan [IPMP]); (ii) an ESCP; and (iii)



a preliminary SEP. Giving the low risk of involuntary land acquisition envisioned, a commitment to managing livelihood and resettlement issues is included in the ESCP and the ESMF, instead of a standalone RPF. All documents have been disclosed in-country on the MGCSP website and on the World Bank website⁵⁷. Likewise, giving the low risk of labor-influx, LMP is included in the ESMF which will be used to manage labor-related issues rather than a stand-alone LMP. The ESMF includes a description of principles and objectives governing resettlement preparation and implementation with a screening tool that includes sections to help identify potential land and economic displacements. The ESMF also provided the overarching environmental and social management guidelines that includes the social screening tools and protocol to be applied to any sub-projects and subsequent preparation of the relevant Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIAs) such as Environmental and Social Management Plans (ESMPs) and/or Resettlement Action Plans/Abbreviated Resettlement Action Plans. Upon the project becoming effective and the recruitment of Environmental and Social Specialists, the MGSP shall conduct a Gender Analysis and develop a SEA/SH Action Plan proportionate to the risks identified.

V. GRIEVANCE REDRESS SERVICES

105. Communities and individuals who believe that they are adversely affected by a World Bank supported project may submit complaints to existing project-level GRMs or the World Bank's Grievance Redress Service (GRS). The GRS ensures that complaints received are promptly reviewed to address project-related concerns. Project affected communities and individuals may submit their complaint to the World Bank's independent Inspection Panel which determines whether harm occurred, or could occur, as a result of World Bank non-compliance with its policies and procedures. Complaints may be submitted at any time after concerns have been brought directly to the World Bank's attention, and World Bank Management has been given an opportunity to respond. For information on how to submit complaints to the World Bank's corporate GRS, please visit <http://www.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/products-and-services/grievance-redress-service>. For information on how to submit complaints to the World Bank Inspection Panel, please visit www.inspectionpanel.org.

VI. KEY RISKS

106. **The overall risk rating of the project is rated Substantial.**

107. **Political and governance risk is rated Moderate.** While Liberia's political situation is relatively stable, the country is still undergoing a long-term process of re-building its public sector, including ministries. The Government's development policies and plans demonstrate a commitment to gender equality and addressing GBV, but there is a risk of changes to Government objectives, particularly given the competing demands created by global COVID-19 pandemic. Though fighting corruption is a priority Government policy, it remains a key driver of fragility and public mistrust. Corruption and governance issues could manifest in the project, which envisions contact between project workers, beneficiaries, and

⁵⁷ Preliminary SEP, ESCP, and draft ESMF were disclosed in-country on April 27, 2022. Preliminary SEP and ESCP were disclosed on the World Bank website on March 28, 2022 and draft ESMF as well as updated ESCP were disclosed on the World Bank website on May 28, 2022.



community-level structures. These risks will be managed by ensuring monitoring of the political environment and development priorities and establishing grievance redress and accountability mechanisms.

108. **Macroeconomic risk is rated Moderate.** The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing macroeconomic fragility in Liberia, and as of June 2021, GDP had shrunk by 3.0 percent in 2020 (although it was expected to recover to 3.6 percent in 2021 before gradually rising to an average of 5.2 percent over 2022-2025). There is limited fiscal space to counter shocks and implement GoL's development program under the PAPD. However, the project aims to help mitigating these risks by enhancing women's economic productivity and livelihoods, ensuring that the country takes advantage of the economic contributions of a higher proportion of its population.

109. **Sector strategies and policies risk is rated Low.** The project is aligned with key Government development priorities for economic growth and women's empowerment and will help operationalize key pillars of the PAPD (2018-2023) by complementing Pillar One's focus on gender equality. The project is also aligned with GoL's renewed emphasis on eliminating GBV as demonstrated by the September 2020 declaration of a national emergency on rape and the introduction of the Anti-SGBV Roadmap (2020-2022).

110. **Technical design of project risk is rated Substantial.** While the project will implement approaches to economic and social empowerment and social norm change that have a track record of success in Liberia and comparable settings in Sub-Saharan Africa, there are technical design risks. Activities that target social norm change can be challenging, long-term efforts that require a highly localized approach. To mitigate these risks, the methodologies under consideration generally take a long-term, multi-year approach that is adaptable to the context and which moves progressively through gender equality topics to build buy-in and take into account the potential for pushback. Further, there are design risks associated with the integration of the different elements of the project and the inclusion of multiple ministries as technical partners, risks that may be exacerbated by the capacity limitations of the Implementing Agency, MGCSP. The design will also require a highly coordinated approach. The project will address these risks by ensuring that mechanisms for the integration and delivery of the components are fully in place prior to the start of beneficiary-focused activities, including coordination mechanisms with multiple ministries (see Implementation Arrangements for a description of the project's coordination mechanisms). The project will also use a phased approach informed by adaptive learning, in which the interventions are rolled out in initial counties before implementing on a wider scale, and ensure a flexible design with strong monitoring, evaluation and learning components to inform project modifications.

111. **Institutional capacity for implementation and sustainability risk is rated Substantial.** While MGCSP has experience with World Bank-financed projects, the institution has significant weaknesses in technical capacity and resources that may hinder project implementation (see Implementation Arrangements above). Further, the design of the project will require significant coordination of multi-sectoral activities by MGCSP, MoA, MoE, MoH and other stakeholders. There is a risk that implementation and coordination will be unclear as the project seeks to address multiple facets of women's social and economic well-being. Further, while laws and policies within the sector have advanced, traditional norms continue to influence institutions and actors, making the attitudes and positions of government, traditional and religious authorities critical to project success. Finally, the project poses sustainability risks, as there is a risk that the Government will not be able to sustain implementation of the approaches beyond the life of the project. To manage these risks, the project will invest strongly in capacity-building, using a phased approach in which implementation mechanisms are fully established prior to the commencement of



activities with beneficiaries. In addition to this implementation support, the project has a component dedicated to improving the institutional capacity of the MGCSP and other key ministries to enhance their ability to deliver gender- and GBV-focused programming at central and local level over the long term. The project will also address sustainability by supporting GoL to (first) develop a platform for policy dialogue among Ministries on gender equality issues, and (in the longer term) develop a national government program on gender and empowerment.

112. Fiduciary risk is rated High. Weaknesses in the GoL's fiduciary system present risks for the misappropriation of funds. This includes the abuse of contracts with large fund outlays, poorly defined or implemented controls, and lapses in the follow-up of internal and external audit findings to allow for a strengthened fiduciary environment. The World Bank will employ smart fiduciary techniques during the COVID-19 period to mitigate any remnant fiduciary risks that may arise. These may include asking for DA Bank statement review monthly and linking the state of disbursements to key project outputs to determine whether unit costs of measurable outputs make sense. Risks will also be mitigated by (i) establishing a PMU with a professional cohort of FM assistants and procurement specialists with experience in implementing World Bank-financed projects; and (ii) providing intensive fiduciary support through staff based in Monrovia. For FM the PFMU will be responsible for all high-level FM issues given the experience they have gained in managing finances of over 95 percent of the projects. A separate implementation support plan is currently being developed by the fiduciary team to mitigate the heightened risks. The same plan will be used to guide the team, and it will be updated biannually when new information becomes available. The PIM will also contain a separate chapter focusing on an enhanced accountability framework for per diems and allowances, as well as approval responsibilities. The GoL internal audit of the PFMU will be called upon to assist with frequent reviews of core project activities to ensure that controls are working as planned.

113. Environmental and social risk is rated Moderate: The project is expected to have a positive social impact at the individual and community level in that it will promote gender equality and economic opportunity and will address harmful social norms and GBV as a barrier to empowerment. However, there is a risk of exclusion of marginalized or vulnerable groups from participation in the project's benefits. As discussed below, there are also moderate SEA/SH risks, as well as risks of other forms of GBV (including intimate partner violence) if the empowerment methodologies are not well-designed and rolled out. This can occur if men perceive traditional roles to be threatened as the project addresses gender inequality and GBV, as discussed below. Environmental impacts are also expected to be moderate, potentially stemming from enhancing women's participation in agriculture. Appropriate mitigation measures have been put in the project's ESMF and related instruments. Finally, MGCSP's experience and capacity to manage environmental and social risks is weak. Accordingly, two environmental and social safeguards staff have been included in the Implementation Arrangements, and the World Bank will continue to provide environmental and social management support. Additional risks to mitigate under the environmental and social safeguards:

- *Social and GBV risks related to shifting social norms.* The project's direct engagement at the community level on sensitive issues of social and gender norms and GBV requires special care and attention. If these engagements are not well-designed and rolled out, there could be risks of community rejection and backlash, and more particularly there could be risks for women of increased violence from spouses or partners who may perceive their traditional roles to be threatened. Further, these discussions may result in higher levels of reporting, help-seeking behavior and the need for services among GBV survivors as awareness of GBV increases among women participants, even if incidents are not project-related. The project has intentionally selected the *SASA!* methodology to address the norms that drive GBV



because it includes comprehensive harm mitigation strategies within the approach, incorporating key actions to ensure that risks of violence to women and community-level backlash are reduced. These harm reduction strategies include, among others, (i) a mapping and engagement of key stakeholders including community leaders prior to discussions with community members; (ii) an extended time frame that aligns activities with the community's level of readiness, and which gradually introduces carefully-designed and contextualized materials only in line with community readiness; (iii) strategies specifically intended to engage and secure support from community leaders; (iv) the establishment of a referral pathway to GBV service providers for survivors before initiating activities; and (v) prioritization of the training and mentoring of staff and community level actors, with support from organizational structures that have the capacity to sustain sensitive programming and a long-term presence in the communities (among other measures). The project will also conduct an SEA/SH risk screening assessment within communities prior to implementation to ensure the appropriateness of the approach for the local setting. It also includes subcomponent 2.a, which will build capacity for basic GBV services at the local level, strengthening the referral pathway to GBV service providers.

- *SEA/SH risks are moderate:* Risks of SEA/SH may also arise where project actors interact with beneficiaries, particularly in settings with elevated GBV rates and other contextual risks. The project will include a full suite of GBV/SEA/SH risk mitigation measures in its safeguards instruments, which will include; (i) mapping out GBV service providers within project areas (as a risk mitigation measure and as part of subcomponent 2.a); (ii) ensuring that the project's GRM has ethical, confidential and gender-sensitive reporting channels with a clear referral pathway to service providers; (iii) community sensitization on GBV risks and reporting mechanisms; (iv) Code of Conduct requirements for all project service providers, consultants and/or other contractors who engage with communities, as well as plans for the management of SEA/SH risks and incident response; and (v) sensitization, training, and capacity-building for the Implementing Agency on managing SEA/SH risks. These activities will be documented in an SEA/SH Action Plan with an Accountability and Response Framework.

114. **Stakeholders risk is rated Substantial:** The project has engaged closely with Government stakeholders as well as with development partners, NGOs, and other non-government stakeholders. The project aligns with the objectives communicated by these institutions, and engagement will expand to communities during implementation. While the project's multi-sectoral approach will require significant stakeholder coordination, this is being built into both the project's design and the implementation arrangements. However, as noted above the project's activities to address social norms relate to sensitive issues of gender, power, attitudes and beliefs, which may be sensitive. As discussed above, the design of the project's social norms approaches incorporates a number of strategies to reduce the risks of conflicting stakeholder interests.



VII. RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND MONITORING

Results Framework

COUNTRY: Liberia

Liberia Women Empowerment Project

Project Development Objectives(s)

The project development objective is to improve social and livelihood services for women and girls in targeted communities, foster positive social norms and strengthen the government's capacity to advance women and girls' empowerment.

Project Development Objective Indicators

Indicator Name	PBC	Baseline	Intermediate Targets				End Target
			1	2	3	4	
Improve social and livelihood services for women and girls in targeted communities							
Women benefiting from climate resilient livelihood activities supported by the project (Number)		0.00	0.00	3,000.00	16,000.00	36,000.00	36,000.00
Women and girls benefitting from project-supported facilities (education, GBV and ASRH) (Percentage)		0.00	0.00	0.00	50.00	50.00	70.00
Foster positive social norms							
Men and women supported by		0.00	0.00	0.00	35.00	35.00	65.00



Indicator Name	PBC	Baseline	Intermediate Targets				End Target
			1	2	3	4	
the project that believe intimate partner violence is not justified (Percentage)							
Women supported by the project that believe that intimate partner violence is not justified (Percentage)		0.00	0.00	0.00	30.00	35.00	65.00
Men supported by the project that believe that intimate partner violence is not justified (Percentage)		0.00	0.00	0.00	35.00	35.00	65.00
Community members engaged in the program think that adolescent girls should not marry before 18 (Percentage)		0.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	20.00	50.00
Strengthen the government's capacity to advance women and girls' empowerment							
Sex-disaggregated data collection capacity built (Yes/No)		No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Platform for policy dialogue on gender, empowerment and GBV established (Yes/No)		No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



Intermediate Results Indicators by Components

Indicator Name	PBC	Baseline	Intermediate Targets				End Target
			1	2	3	4	
Fostering positive social norms and community mobilization							
Improvement in women's perception of relationship with their husbands (Likert scale or range of answers type question) (Percentage)		0.00	0.00	0.00	10.00	10.00	50.00
Grievances registered and addressed within the time specified in the Grievance Redress Mechanism (Percentage)		0.00	0.00	80.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Women reporting to be actively engaged in community groups (assisting to meeting, and benefiting from trainings) supported by the project (Percentage)		0.00	0.00	0.00	60.00	60.00	70.00
Enhancing basic services in health and education							
Facilities and Community Based Organizations supported by the project that are implementing improved survivor-centered approaches (Percentage)		0.00	0.00	15.00	30.00	50.00	60.00
Community members engaged in the program who think that adolescent girls should not marry before 18 (Percentage)		0.00	0.00	0.00	20.00	20.00	50.00
Promoting resilient livelihoods through community-led approaches							
Climate-informed business		0.00	0.00	200.00	1,000.00	2,100.00	2,100.00



Indicator Name	PBC	Baseline	Intermediate Targets				End Target
			1	2	3	4	
plans developed, consulted, and financed through participatory processes (Number)							
Women amongst beneficiaries reporting making decisions on large household expenditure (Percentage)		0.00	0.00	0.00	40.00	40.00	80.00
Women-led community groups reporting increase in participation in value chains (Percentage)		0.00	0.00	0.00	30.00	30.00	50.00
Strengthening public institutions to advance gender equality							
Strategy and capacity-building plan established for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) and sex-disaggregated data generation (Yes/No)		No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Qualitative agriculture survey conducted (Yes/No)		No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Project management, monitoring and evaluation							
Assessments and evaluations conducted (Number)		0.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	4.00



Monitoring & Evaluation Plan: PDO Indicators

Indicator Name	Definition/Description	Frequency	Datasource	Methodology for Data Collection	Responsibility for Data Collection
Women benefiting from climate resilient livelihood activities supported by the project	The indicator will cover women beneficiaries supported under component 3 of the project associated with climate-resilient livelihood support. This will be tracked through regular project monitoring.	Annual	Regular Project Monitoring Records	Review of routine data tracked by the PMU as part of project implementation	PMU
Women and girls benefitting from project-supported facilities (education, GBV and ASRH)	The indicator will measure the percentage of women and girls benefitting from the project, seeking GBV, Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health or education services supported by the project (adolescent is defined as between 10 and 19 years of age).	Baseline will be done at the start of project work, followed by mid-term and end-term survey	Survey Data	LQAS Approach (Lot Quality Assurance Sampling)	PMU
Men and women supported by the project that believe intimate partner violence is not justified	This indicator measures acceptability of intimate partner violence among respondents as a result of changing social norms supported by subcomponent 1a. This indicator has been derived from DHS and SASA!	Baseline, mid-term review and end term. The target for year 4 reflects the mid-term review done	survey data	Survey will be conducted using LQAS approach (Lot Quality Assurance Sampling) where five supervision areas or 'lots' will be chosen for each county and 19 random sample points in each lot will	PMU



	indicators and will be disaggregated by gender for the project.	in year 3		be collected, i.e. at least 95 total interviews pr. county to understand the acceptability of performance for this indicator.	
Women supported by the project that believe that intimate partner violence is not justified					
Men supported by the project that believe that intimate partner violence is not justified					
Community members engaged in the program think that adolescent girls should not marry before 18	This indicator will cover students, parents and community leaders captured under subcomponent 2b of the project. It will assess a change in their perceptions on early marriage driven by social norms around the subject.	A baseline will be conducted at the beginning of project work, as well as a survey at mid-term and the end target is 50% above the baseline, to be surveyed at end of project	Survey		Lead Service Provider



Sex-disaggregated data collection capacity built	This indicator will monitor the ability of the Government to collect sex-disaggregated data. The indicator is the existence of government approved methodology for collection of sex-disaggregated data.	once at mid-term and again at end of project	Government records	Government records	PMU
Platform for policy dialogue on gender, empowerment and GBV established	The indicator will cover the project's progress towards establishing a platform for policy dialogue on gender, empowerment and GBV, led by the MGCSP. It will ensure policy dialogue and coordination among key ministries under subcomponent 4b of the project. The establishment of the platform will be measured at the end of project.	End of the Project	Ministerial decree by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection confirming the establishment of the platform	Ministerial decree from MGCSP confirming the establishment of the platform	PMU

Monitoring & Evaluation Plan: Intermediate Results Indicators

Indicator Name	Definition/Description	Frequency	Datasource	Methodology for Data Collection	Responsibility for Data Collection
Improvement in women's perception of relationship with their husbands (Likert scale or range of answers type question)	The indicator will capture attitudes towards women's personal experience of agency and voice through	Mid-term and end-term survey	Likert Scale-Based Survey	LQAS Approach (Lot Quality Assurance Sampling). Respondents will be surveyed using	Service Provider



	their intra-household relationships associated with changing social norms under subcomponent 1a of the project. The indicator has been adapted from the SASA! methodology.			Likert scale-based questions adapted from SASA! Rapid Assessment Surveys and Outcome Tracking Indicators	
Grievances registered and addressed within the time specified in the Grievance Redress Mechanism	This indicator will be monitored by the PMU by using the Grievance Redress Mechanism system data	Monthly	Routine Data on the GRM system	Review of GRM system data	Service Provider and PMU
Women reporting to be actively engaged in community groups (assisting to meeting, and benefiting from trainings) supported by the project	The indicator will capture women in community groups who participate in regular group meetings and receive capacity building trainings, civic participation in local development and climate and disaster risk management, covered under subcomponent 1b of the project.	Mid-term and end-term survey	Survey Data	LQAS Approach (Lot Quality Assurance Sampling)	Service Provider
Facilities and Community Based Organizations supported by the project that are implementing improved survivor-centered approaches	This indicator will be measured by tracking the proportion of facilities and Community Based Organizations that are implementing improved survivor-centered approaches. The indicator will cover facilities and Community Based	Mid-term and end-term survey	Survey Data	A review of existing facilities and Community Based Organizations working with GBV survivors in target counties will be conducted through a survey to measure the extent of adoption of survivor-centered	Consortium of Service Providers



	Organizations benefiting from subcomponent 2a of the project.			approaches	
Community members engaged in the program who think that adolescent girls should not marry before 18	This indicator will cover beneficiaries captured under subcomponent 2b of the project. It will assess a change in their perceptions on early marriage driven by social norms around the subject.	A baseline will be conducted at the beginning of project work, as well as a survey at mid-term and end of project. The end target is 50% above the baseline.	Survey Data	LQAS Approach (Lot Quality Assurance Sampling)	Consortium of Service Providers
Climate-informed business plans developed, consulted, and financed through participatory processes	This indicator will track the climate-informed business plans for female livelihood groups that are actually financed by the project, developed through support from capacity building trainings using participatory decision-making processes. This will cover beneficiaries	Annual	Project Monitoring Records	Routine data tracked by the PMU as part of project implementation	Consortium of Service Providers



	impacted by component 3 of the project.				
Women amongst beneficiaries reporting making decisions on large household expenditure	This indicator captures change in women's agency, voice and decision-making ability through enhanced influence over their finances.	Mid-term and end-term perception surveys	Survey	LQAS Approach (Lot Quality Assurance Sampling)	Consortium of Service Providers
Women-led community groups reporting increase in participation in value chains	This indicator measures increased partnerships and market linkages for women-led groups by tracking their participation in value chains. This indicates improvement in livelihood and economic activities for women-led community groups supported under component 3 of the project.	Project mid-term and end-term	Project monitoring records	Routine data tracked by the PMU as part of project implementation	Consortium of Service Providers
Strategy and capacity-building plan established for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) and sex-disaggregated data generation	The indicator captures the establishment of a need-based strategy and capacity building plan to ensure enhanced monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning, uptake and generation of sex disaggregated data by public institutions.	End-Term	Evidence from ministerial documents	Evidence collected from ministerial records, validation and discussion meeting minutes.	PMU
Qualitative agriculture survey conducted	This indicator will track successful launch of the agriculture survey to	Once at end of year three	Survey conducted	Ministerial publications	PMU



	generate knowledge gendered dimension of climate impact on agriculture livelihoods to support the Ministry of Agriculture				
Assessments and evaluations conducted	Assessments will help establish a baseline, an assessment for the MTR, an end of project assessment and Impact evaluation	year 1, year 3, and year 5	Assessment and evaluation surveys.	Survey tools to be determined based on project activities	PMU



ANNEX 1: Implementation Arrangements and Support Plan

COUNTRY: Liberia

Liberia Women Empowerment Project

(i) Project Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

1. **The institutional and implementation arrangements will be developed at the national, county, and district levels using the following principles:** (i) build institutional capacity by supporting ministries and government entities at central, county and district levels; (ii) ensure presence of implementation entities at the county and district levels; and (iii) support national coordination for the multisector approach of the project by engaging relevant government agencies in project implementation and supervision. Details of the institutional and implementation arrangements are summarized below.

2. **The institutional arrangements have been discussed at length in the main text of the Project Appraisal Document** and they include: (i) on the national level a high-level Inter-Ministerial PSC and a PMU. The PMU will be housed by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, which will be the implementing agency. The PMU will be responsible for implementation of the project. The high-level Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee will provide strategic guidance and ensure consistency and support for the multi-sectoral project activities, and the PMU will have the responsibility for project management. The PMU will also be supported by the respective line ministries in order to deliver the activities of the project. A project TC will meet regularly to review technical details of the implementation and provide technical guidance to the PSC. For Components 1, 2 and 3 the PMU will contract a lead Organization to deliver the components integrated and concurrently. This organization will do so by sub-contracting in accordance with government and World Bank rules and regulations. At county level, the county coordinators of the relevant ministries will support the implementation of the project and will liaise with the coordinators of the lead organization. At community level the organization will have CBAs that will collaborate with local community structures. The TOR for the lead organization will be annexed in the PIM.

(ii) Implementation Support Plan

3. The strategy for the Implementation Support Plan (ISP) has been devised to undertake the necessary mitigation measures to address the major risks identified in the Systematic Operations Risk-rating Tool SORT that are within the control of the project, namely: (i) technical design related to ensuring a range of technical staff from the World Bank are engaged in the project and are providing the technical assistance needed to the implementing agency and the line ministries; (ii) institutional capacities, particularly for MGCSP; (iii) fiduciary issues; and (iv) environmental and social risks. The project design cannot address all the risks, but measures are in place to mitigate most. The ISP is designed to review and ensure the mitigation measures are effective and to reinforce them where necessary. The ISP is also designed to enhance the capacity of implementing agencies in a range of technical areas.

4. The ISP will be undertaken by World Bank, based on three major principles: (i) frequent local level



and field-based implementation support of project activities, including consultations with beneficiaries, complemented by remote implementation support; (ii) technical capacity-building for the implementing agency (PMU, line ministry staff, the TC, and the PSC), complementing and coordinating with the institutional strengthening in Component 4; and (iii) maintain high-level dialogue with the GoL on the empowerment of women. In the initial period of project implementation, the ISP will focus on supporting core management skills to help ensure compliance with World Bank fiduciary and safeguards requirements. The World Bank will also provide targeted technical assistance on M&E. Furthermore, the World Bank will use its convening power to bring coordinate with other activities supported by the World Bank and other development partners. Over time, the World Bank will support government capacity in the following areas: (i) collecting data for program planning, development, M&E; (ii) improving IA capacity for implementation, planning and monitoring of empowerment activities; and (iii) developing lessons learned to scale up the approach of the project to the rest of the country, and to support the development of a national women's empowerment program.

5. In order to support the procurement and FM capacity of the implementing agency, the World Bank will provide a series of training to all staff of the PMU, coupled with targeted training for the procurement and FM staff—including the specialists at the PMU and the supporting accountants. The World Bank will continue to provide hands on coaching which started during the preparation of the project.

6. The World Bank's task team will be led by a Task Team Leader (TTL) based remotely and a TTL in Country Office (CO). The team will include country-based FM, procurement, Environmental and Social Safeguards staff and sector specialists. The ISP will make use of the following: (i) regular implementation support missions, at least three times a year given the fragile context and the adaptive approach of the project requiring continuous learning. It is expected that in-country and regionally based staff will have more regular missions to project activity areas in the first two years; (ii) a Mid-Term Review (MTR), which will be an opportunity to make major adjustments to the project design if necessary, review the overall indicators, and revise if necessary for the last part of the project; (iii) regular fiduciary compliance reviews, including review of IFR and external audits; (iv) technical audits of the quality of implementation; (v) impact assessment; and (vi) implementation completion, where an impact evaluation of the project will be undertaken and lessons drawn to inform future empowerment operations in Liberia. The table below presents the focus of the implementation support and the skills required.

Table 1.1: Implementation support and skills required

Time	Focus	Main Skills Needed	Resource Estimate (Staff Week)
First twelve months	Project implementation start up Support PMU Support to building blocks of project management (FM, procurement, M&E, inter-agency governance structure) and participatory planning processes Development of monitoring methodology, including baseline survey	Task management/social development (remote)	14
		Social Development co-TTL (CO-based)	16
		FM (CO-based)	4
		Procurement (CO-based)	4
		Environmental and Social Safeguard (CO-based)	6



	Hiring of NGO/not-for-profit organization and consultants	M&E/MIS (remote)	6
		Agriculture Specialist (CO-based)	2
		Strategic Communications (CO-based)	1
		Livelihoods specialist (remote)	6
		GBV specialist (remote)	2
		SASA! Specialist	8
Time	Focus	Main Skills Needed	Resource Estimate (Staff Week)
12-48 months	Joint implementation support missions with government and monitor implementation performance Review of annual work/financial plans Review of quarterly/annual reports Review of audits/IFRs Process review on integrated approach Support revisions of operational manual Undertake MTR	Task management/social development (remote)	14
		Social Development co-TTL (CO-based)	16
		FM (CO-based)	3
		Procurement (CO-based)	3
		ESS (CO-based)	4
		Health (CO-based)	1
		Education (CO-based)	1
		M&E/MIS	4
		Strategic Communications (CO-based)	2
		Livelihoods specialist (remote)	10
		SASA! Specialist	8
48-60 months	As above, plus: Impact assessment Impact evaluation Project completion	As above	As above

(iii) Financial Management

7. The PFMU, through its Director for Donor Financed Projects will be responsible for preparing the quarterly Interim Unaudited Financial Reports (IUFRs). The IFRs will be submitted to the World Bank 45 days after end of each calendar quarter. The Lead Service Provider, within 30 days, shall prepare its quarterly IFRs and submits same to the PMU. Upon acceptance, the reports will be consolidated to form part with the quarterly IFR that will be prepared by the PFMU. The existing IFR format currently used by other World Bank-financed projects in Liberia has been customized for the project and agreed upon. The project will also prepare annual financial statements at the end of the calendar year in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards – cash basis. The financial statements will comprise, at a minimum, of: (i) sources and uses of funds (summary of Expenditures shown under the main program headings and by main categories of expenditures for the period); (ii) notes to the financial statements,



including background information on the project, the accounting policies, detailed analysis, and relevant explanation of the main accounts/major balances, etc. In addition, the project shall provide, as an annex to the financial statements, an inventory of fixed assets acquired according to asset classes, dates of purchase, location, and cost.

8. Annual audits will be conducted at the end of each calendar year of the GoL for the project. The General Audit Commission (GAC) will conduct the external audit as required by law. As the result of the project being implemented jointly by the PMU and the Lead Service Provider, the Lead Service Provider shall be audited by the GAC to the extent of the contract that will be signed by and between the parties. Alternatively, other Independent and qualified audit firms, acceptable to the World Bank, would be selected to carry out the audit of the project if GAC will not be able to conduct the audit. Additionally, GAC is also allowed to conduct a joint audit with other auditing firms that are acceptable to the World Bank. The selection of independent firms other than GAC shall be on competitive basis and in accordance with the World Bank's procurement guidelines. The TOR of the auditors shall be cleared or granted no objection by the World Bank. The project financial statements including movements in the DAs will be audited in accordance with International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAI) and a single opinion will be issued to cover the project financial statements in accordance with the World Bank's audit policy. The auditors' report and opinion in respect on the financial statements, including the management letter, would be furnished to the World Bank within six months after the end of each fiscal year.

9. The overall FM risk is assessed as 'High' but reduced to a residual risk rating of 'Substantial' in view of the risk-mitigation measures to be put in place. These include the use of the FM system of the PFMU, management of the FM services by the existing staff at the PFMU who have experience in World Bank-financed projects, and the strengthening of on-the-job training to be provided for the staff in the PCU and PFMU. The PFMU will maintain financial records for the project and will submit to the World Bank, quarterly unaudited IFRs 45 days after the end of each quarter. In addition, the project management will submit the project-audited accounts on an annual basis six month after the end of each fiscal year, in accordance with the legal covenants to be agreed upon for the project.

10. FM Implementation Support Plan. FM implementation support would be conducted consistent with the risks rating for the project. The FM implementation support missions' objectives will include reviewing the expenditure for eligibility, availability of supporting documentation and adequacy for documentation.

Table 1.2: Risk Rating Summary Table

Risk	Risk rating		Risk mitigating measures	Residual Risk Rating
Risk		Risk		
1	Country Level Weaknesses in legislative scrutiny, low human capacity, declining revenues and energy challenges affecting timely and adequate intergovernmental fiscal transfers.	H	The government has developed a PFM strategy and related action plan and is being supported in implementation by donors, including the World Bank.	H



Risk	Risk rating		Risk mitigating measures	Residual Risk Rating
2	Entity Level The political arm of the Entity and / or Management may unduly interfere with, and/or override, project FM controls.	H	An independent project FM team with officers paid by the project will manage the fiduciary aspects of the project to provide increased independence. An independent external audit will be carried out annually under the project. Initially, regular 6 monthly FM reviews will be conducted by the World Bank to provide support. Fiduciary controls will be enhanced through mitigation measures to address control risks outlined below, including: -Boosting Internal Audit support by expanding the scope of project internal auditor - Enhanced implementation support by the World Bank	S
3	Project Level Weak FM capacity could result in slow execution of the project and delayed reporting could impact on progress.	H	A FM team situated in the PFMU will comprise qualified personnel that will handle the day-to-day management for the project World Bank FM support will be provided to enhance FM policies and procedures and provide training and FM supervision will be regular (at least 6 monthly).	S
4	Budgeting Annual work plan and Budget preparation does not reflect a comprehensive and adequate plan of efficient and economic expenditure to achieve results for use in control of the use of funds. Caused by delay in preparations and inadequacy in a) level of activities covered (i.e. comprehensiveness), and b) reliability of unit/total costs. Poor budget monitoring can lead to budget overruns.	S	The project budget was finalized.. The AWP would be submitted annually before implementation starts for review by the World Bank which would ensure it is realistic and unit cost estimates are reasonable based on industry and global experiences gathered in some jurisdictions that have undertaken similar operations and also cross check the same with the local market. Also, budget execution reporting through quarterly IFRs will be routinely monitored by IDA with variations in unit costs tracked to ensure major	M



			deviations are followed up and investigated. The Budget Office will also monitor budgeted activities to ensure effective use of budgets	
5	Accounting An accounting system that is incapable of accurately recording project transactions in a timely manner resulting in unreliable, untimely financial information and difficulties in assessing the financial status of the project and how financial resources have been consumed.	H	Effective installation and training on Sun will support improvement, having dedicated FM Staff hired to the project boosting PFMU capacity. The Financial Procedures Manual will be revised to provide comprehensive guidance on accounting. The World Bank will provide support to relevant project staff at PFMU.	
6	Internal Control Internal controls in place for the project are insufficient in coverage and/or design to detect the improper use of project funds. No system to monitor internal controls to ensure they are functioning as intended including addressing external audit recommendations.	H	Clearly defined internal control framework documented in PFMU FM Manual that is subject to regular control by a project Internal Auditor in the PFMU. Training to be conducted for FM staff to enhance knowledge and capacity to perform key internal controls well. Internal audit reports will be shared with IDA.	S
7	Fund Flow Inadequate funds flow to implement the project effectively. Transfers to the project are not properly authorized. Project funds are not adequately safeguarded, and cash transactions of the project are not able to be accounted for in a complete, accurate and timely manner.	S	The PFMU will be responsible for preparing and submitting withdrawal applications. IDA funds will be disbursed through the USD-denominated DA to be opened by the PFMU. Simplified flow of funds arrangements will be included in the FM Manual. Dedicated FM staff and training, as noted above, will support adequate funds flow for the project.	M
8	Financial Reporting Financial reports of the project are unreliable and/or outdated resulting in difficulties in a) timely assessment of the financial performance of the project, and b) project management accountability for the proper use of projects funds.	S	Project will have dedicated FM staff recruited to the PMU to enhance PFMU capacity and the sun System will be used to track and monitor expenses. All the FM staff will be trained on the World Bank procedures.	M
9	Auditing The audit will not detect significant improper use of project funds, non-compliance with World Bank requirements, and/or internal control weaknesses.	S	The audit TOR will be agreed, and General Auditing Commission will conduct the audit. The audit would be done in accordance with ISSAI promulgated by the International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI). After the audit the client will be required to prepare an audit implementation plan which	M



		will show who will be responsible for implementing each recommendation and gives a deadline on when it will be implemented. The World Bank will liaise closely with implementing agencies during Implementation support to ensure that management takes corrective actions on identified weaknesses in internal controls.	
OVERALL RISK RATING		H	S

H — High, S — Substantial, M — Moderate and L — Low

(iv) Disbursement

11. **Funds Flow and Disbursement Arrangements.** Adequate funds flow arrangements will be put in place and have been agreed with the World Bank. The funds will flow into a DA in a commercial bank in Liberia acceptable to the World Bank.

12. The disbursement arrangements will consider, among other things, an assessment of the FM and procurement arrangements, cash flow needs of the project, and disbursement experience of the Borrower. Those arrangements are outlined in the FA and additional information will be provided in the disbursement letter, which will form part of the FA.

13. Before funds from the DA are withdrawn or committed, the authorized representative of the Borrower (as designated in the Financing Agreement) will furnish to the World Bank, electronically through the Client Connection website (<http://clientconnection.worldbank.org>), or through an authorized signatory Designation Letter, the name(s) of the official(s) authorized (i) to sign and submit applications for withdrawal and applications for a Special Commitment (collectively, applications); and (ii) to receive secure identification credentials from the World Bank. The Government will notify the World Bank of any changes in signature authority, either electronically in Client Connection or through an updated authorized signatory Designation Letter. Applications will be provided to the World Bank in such form as is required to access funds from the Financing Account and will include such information as the World Bank may reasonably request. Applications and necessary supporting documents will be submitted to the World Bank electronically, in a manner and on terms and conditions specified by the World Bank, through the Client Connection website. The World Bank will, at its discretion, temporarily or permanently disallow the electronic submission of applications by the Borrower. The World Bank will permit the Government to complete and submit applications manually in paper form. Paper application forms can be found on the Client Connection website or may be obtained from the World Bank upon request. The World Bank establishes a minimum value for applications for Reimbursement, Direct Payment, and Special Commitment. The World Bank reserves the right to not accept applications that are below such minimum value.



14. The following table specifies categories of eligible expenditures.

Table 1.3. Eligible expenditures

Category	Amount of the Credit Allocated (expressed in SDR)	Amount of the Grant Allocated (expressed in SDR)	Percentage of Expenditures to be Financed (inclusive of Taxes)
(1) Goods, works, non-consulting services, consulting services, Operating Costs and Training under Parts A, B, C.1(a), D, and E of the project	6,567,000	13,300,000	33 percent Credit; and 67 percent Grant
(2) Livelihood Grants, and Social Economic Packages under Part C.1(b) of the project	13,433,000	0	100 percent
(3) Emergency Expenditures under Part F of the project	0	0	100 percent
TOTAL AMOUNT	20,000,000	13,300,000	

(v) Procurement

15. **Procurement** of goods, works and consultancy services under this project will be implemented using (i) World Bank Procurement Regulations for IFP Borrowers, dated November 2020 and (ii) Guidelines on Preventing and Combating Fraud and Corruption in Projects Financed by IBRD Loans and IDA Credits and Grants, dated October 15, 2006, and revised in January 2011 and as of July 1, 2016; and (ii) provisions stipulated in the Financing Agreement, including the exceptions to NCB procedures.

16. **The borrower prepared a PPSD and Procurement Plan for this Project.** The PPSD findings indicate that there will be international and national firms and consultancies with a preference for international markets given the lack of adequate technical experience and human resources required to execute the design of the first three components of the project. Nonetheless, when it comes to Component 4 of the project, preference will be given to national firms. Additionally, the PPSD outlined the following:



- **Consulting services** will include procurement of a lead NGOs, consultancy services to hire capacity building firms, consulting firms/NGO to conduct Policy dialogue and coordination, consultancy services on baseline for impact assessment, individual consultants as member of PMU.
- **Goods and equipment** will include contracts for vehicles, Laptops, office equipment and furniture. Procurement of goods will be done using the Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers.
- **Non-consulting services** will include contracts for insurance services, and any other related services
- **Hiring of International and Local NGOs:** Not-for-profit organizations such as NGOs may be uniquely qualified to assist in the preparation, management, and implementation of projects or carrying out other project activities, because of their involvement in and knowledge of local issues and community needs, or their participatory approaches. Such organizations may be included in the shortlist if they express interest and if the Borrower and the World Bank are satisfied with their qualifications.
- **Training, study tours, conferences, and workshops** are expected for the promotion of the accompanying measures and overall capacity building of stakeholders of the project. Training workshops (including training material and support), conference attendance, and study tours will be carried out based on approved annual training and allied activities plan. A detailed training and workshops plan giving nature of training/workshop, number of trainees/participants, duration, staff months, timing, and estimated cost will be submitted to the World Bank for review and approval before initiating the process.
- **Operating costs.** Incremental recurrent expenditures during project implementation, including maintenance of vehicles, fuel, equipment, office supplies, utilities, consumables, banking charges, advertising expenses, internet service, car insurance, travel, per diems, and accommodations, but excluding salaries of civil and public servants, will be procured using the implementing agency's administrative procedures reviewed and found acceptable by the World Bank
- Each contract to be financed by the credit and grant, different procurement methods, approaches, and markets have been discussed and agreed with the implementing agency.

17. **Assessment of the implementing agency's capacity to implement procurement** was carried out on March 15, 2022. MGCSP is not new to international donor partners, including the World Bank. However, it was noted that apart from the World Bank, the other donors allow MGCSP to use the Public Procurement and Concessions Commission (PPCC) procurement procedures. The parent project of LSSN used the World Bank Procurement Guidelines for procurement of Goods, Works, and Consultants, while the current LSSN AF is being implemented with the New Procurement Regulations. The procurement procedures, organizational structures, staffing, and skills for procurement management of the MGCSP were reviewed. The PMU of the LWEF will assume coordination role and will be responsible for carrying out procurement activities for the project

18. **Procurement Risks** were identified as (i) insufficient capacity, knowledge, and experience in the application of the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers; (ii) limited experience in open international competitive bidding and procurement of consulting services amongst the staff based in the procurement unit of the MGCSP ; (iii) change of key staff; (iv) inadequate contract management capacity; (v) delivery delays due to extreme Weather; (vi) low response of International and Local organizations to show interest in procurement opportunities; and (vii) delay in payments to service providers. The overall procurement risk is therefore rated Substantial.



19. **Procurement risk mitigation measures** that will be adopted include: (i) the project will provide procurement training for project staff, during project preparation to ensure the proper use of the World Bank Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers; (ii) the project will competitively hire an experienced procurement specialist who has vast knowledge of the World Bank procurement regulations; (iii) the project procurement officers will specifically be trained on procurement and contract management in enhancing more skills; (iv) publications of Expression of Interest on World Bank external website, through the embassies, and newspapers for a longer duration; (v) as part of the contract management activities, framework agreements will be entered into for the supply of frequently procured items like stationery as this will help achieve value for money; and (vi) prompt settlement of invoices strengthens service providers' cash flow and engenders their confidence in the procuring entity thereby ensuring early contract completion.

20. **Procurement thresholds.** The thresholds for particular market approaches and procurement methods are indicated in Table 2.1 below. The thresholds for the World Bank's prior review requirements are also provided in Table. The following prior review and method thresholds have been set for the project based on the procurement risk rating.

Table 1.3: Thresholds, Procurement Methods, and Prior Review

No.	Expenditure Category	Contract (C) Value Threshold ^a [equivalent US\$]	Procurement Method	Contracts Subject to Prior Review/[equivalent US\$]
1	Works	$C \geq 5,000,000$	RFB, using Open Competition International market approach	$\geq 10,000,000$
		$200,000 < C < 5,000,000$	RFB using Open Competition National market approach	None
		$C \leq 200,000$	RFQ	None
	Direct Selection -Works	All values	Direct Selection Justification to use Direct Selection should be included in the Procurement Plan	Same as for competitive methods
2	Goods, IT, and non-consulting services	$C \geq 500,000$	RFB using Open Competition International Market Approach and Direct Contracting	$\geq 2,000,000$
		$100,000 < C < 500,000$	RFB using Open Competition National Market Approach	None
		$C \leq 100,000$	RFQ	None
		$C \leq 500,000$	RFQ For motor vehicles, only	None
	Direct Selection -Goods	All values	Direct Selection Justification to use Direct Selection should be included in the Procurement Plan	Same as for competitive methods



No.	Expenditure Category	Contract (C) Value Threshold ^a [equivalent US\$]	Procurement Method	Contracts Subject to Prior Review/[equivalent US\$]
5	International shortlist for selection of consultant firms	$C \geq 1,000,000$	Engineering and Construction Supervision QCBS, QBS, FBS, and LCS using the most appropriate market approach	$\geq 1,000,000$
	National shortlist for selection of consultant firms	$C \leq 100,000$	Consulting Services CQS	$\geq 1,000,000$
		$C \leq 200,000$	Engineering and Construction Supervision CQS	$\geq 1,000,000$
		All values	Direct Selection Justification to use Direct Selection should be included in the PP	Same as for competitive methods
	Selection of Individual consultants	All Values	All Approaches	$\geq 300,000$
6	Direct Selection - Consultants	All value	Direct Selection Justification to use Direct Selection should be included in the PP	Same as for competitive methods
7	Training, workshops, study tours	All values	Based on approved annual work plans and budgets	

Note: CQS = Selection Based on the Consultants' Qualifications; FBS = Selection under a Fixed Budget; LCS = Least-Cost Selection; RFB = Request for Bids; QBS = Quality-Based Selection; QCBS = Quality- and Cost-Based Selection; a. These thresholds are for the purposes of the initial Procurement Plan for the first 18 months. The thresholds will be revised periodically based on re-assessment of risks. All contracts not subject to prior review will be post reviewed.

21. Frequency of procurement implementation support. In addition to the prior review implementation support to be carried out from the World Bank offices, the implementation support missions at least twice a year will include a procurement specialist visiting the project to carry out sample but strategic post review of procurement actions.

22. Standstill Period, Publication of awards and debriefing. Publication of results of the bidding process for goods contracts and for consultant contracts will follow the World Bank Procurement Regulations paragraphs 5.78 to 5.96.

23. Fraud and corruption. All procuring entities as well as bidders and service providers, that is, suppliers, contractors, and consultants, shall observe the highest standard of ethics during the procurement and execution of contracts financed under the project in accordance with all the above World Bank guidelines governing procurement under this project.



ANNEX 2: Gender and Climate

COUNTRY: Liberia

Liberia Women Empowerment Project

1. **The impacts of climate change and variability in Liberia are increasingly becoming more threatening to livelihoods and social resilience, and a barrier to women's empowerment.** Liberia experiences a range of natural climate hazards, including droughts, epidemic diseases, storms, and floods. Mean annual temperature has increased by 0.8°C between 1960 and 2006, an average rate of 0.18°C per decade.⁵⁸ In addition, it is expected that by 2100, Liberia's sea levels will rise 0.6-1.0 meters, devastating climate-sensitive livelihoods, like agriculture and fisheries, and triggering mass climate migration and displacement.⁵⁹ Climate vulnerability is further exacerbated due to Liberia's high dependence on climate sensitive sectors, such as agriculture, mining and forestry. As approximately 58 percent of Liberia's population reside along the coastline and engage in agricultural and fishing income-generating activities, climate shocks will result in significant economic losses and damage to agricultural lands, urban and rural infrastructure, as well as human casualties.⁶⁰ However, there are key factors which account for the gendered differences in vulnerability to climate risks in Liberia, including, a high concentration of women in climate-vulnerable sectors (amounting to 88.2 percent)⁶¹, gendered differences in time use, imbalanced access to assets, credit, and information, and unequal participation in decision-making processes around mitigation and adaptation measures.⁶²

2. **As women represent 70 percent employed in agriculture and perform at least 70 percent of agricultural tasks, they are vulnerable to economic harms from rainfall increases, floods and erosions, and reduced soil quality and crop yields.**⁶³ These challenges are compounded by existing gender inequalities, such as differences in access to and use of agricultural inputs (improved climate-smart technologies), further exacerbating vulnerabilities to climate change and environmental hazards. The impacts on women's social, physical, and economic well-being are immense: changing climate means increased household care burdens (as clean water and fuel become scarce), less education and opportunities (as household demands reduce girls' access to education), and greater exposure to GBV (as climate-related shocks and stressors increase domestic stress levels). As a result, women face formidable barriers in building resilience and adaptive capacity to changing climatic conditions over time.

⁵⁸ World Bank. (2021). *Liberia Climate Risk Country Profile*. https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/15917-WB_Liberia%20Country%20Profile-WEB%20%281%29.pdf

⁵⁹ Data-Pop Alliance. 2021. "Liberia Country Gender Equality Profile: Report." UN Women. <https://datapopalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Report-UNW-liberia.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Data-Pop Alliance. 2021. "Liberia Country Gender Equality Profile: Issue Paper." UN Women. August 2021. <https://datapopalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Issue-paper-UNWLiberia.pdf>.

⁶¹ Green Climate Fund. 2020. "Gender Assessment: Enhancing Climate Information Systems (CIS) for Resilient Development in Liberia." July 2020. <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/sap018-gender-assessment.pdf>.

⁶² World Bank. (2021). *Liberia Climate Risk Country Profile*. https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/15917-WB_Liberia%20Country%20Profile-WEB%20%281%29.pdf

⁶³ Green Climate Fund. 2020. "Gender Assessment: Enhancing Climate Information Systems (CIS) for Resilient Development in Liberia." July 2020. <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/sap018-gender-assessment.pdf>.



3. **Inclusive climate resilience will not be possible without fully recognizing women's agency in local adaptation and mitigation measures.** However, it is reported that women across Africa only access 7 percent of all agriculture extension services and less than 10 percent of credit offered to small holder farmers, thus reducing their access to critical climate information and agricultural inputs that could increase resilience to climate shocks.⁶⁴ As women remain at the core of climate-sensitive sectors, unlocking women's agency in resilience and recovery efforts will be vital to build climate-resilient communities. This project will lay the groundwork for future work on women and girls' empowerment and resilience by integrating a climate change lens into its activities to address vulnerabilities to climate-related shocks and stresses, improve women's access to climate-resilient livelihoods, and center women's voice, agency, and decision-making autonomy in its climate change mitigation and adaptation initiatives.

Table 2.1: Integrated Climate Change Activities in Project Components

Component 1: Fostering Positive Social Norms and Community Mobilization(US\$8.0 million)
Integrated Climate Change Activities under subcomponent 1.b
Under subcomponent 1.b, climate change activities will be integrated under:
1. <u>Communications Campaigns</u> : Focus will be on strengthening local community resilience to climate shocks and climate-related weather events, as well as on climate change impacts on community members, particularly women.
2. <u>Mapping of Existing Groups</u> : Focus will be on mapping climate vulnerabilities by identifying and highlighting the groups that are vulnerable to climate shocks and stressors.
3. <u>Capacity Building</u> : Trainings will focus on climate-resilient crops in agriculture, alternative sources of domestic energy, and efficient uses of available water resources during times of floods and droughts.
4. <u>Leadership Development Programs</u> : Focus will be on increasing climate awareness, knowledge, and access to climate-resilient resources, like climate-smart resilient crops and farming techniques in agriculture, as well as improved land management techniques in the face of floods and droughts.
Component 2: Enhancing Basic Services in Health and Education (US\$5.4 million)
Integrated Climate Change Activities under Subcomponent 2.b
Under subcomponent 2.b, climate change activities will be integrated under:
1. <u>Analysis on Major Constraints faced by Adolescent Girls</u> : A core focus will be on the climate crisis' impacts on girls' education to explore if climate-related events are preventing adolescent girls from learning and remaining in school. According to the Malala Fund, a report projected that in 2021, climate-related events will prevent at least four million adolescent girls in low- and lower-middle income countries from finishing their education. ⁶⁵ This thereby raises the need to analyze how the climate crisis is compounding human capital inequalities to ensure that climate solutions adequately address constraints in access to education.
2. <u>Pilot Study on Adolescent Girls</u> : A core focus will explore non-farm livelihood opportunities to support the transition away from climate-sensitive sectors, like agriculture. As greater climate shocks stimulate irregular rainfall patterns, introduction to non-farming livelihoods and/or climate-resilient crops will be integral to strengthen adaptation and reduce the negative impacts of climate change.
Component 3: Promoting Resilient Livelihoods through Community-led Approaches (US\$23.6 million)
Integrated Climate Change Activities under Subcomponent 3.a (US\$5.6 million)

⁶⁴ "State And Trends in Adaptation Report 2021: How Adaptation Can Make Africa Safer, Greener, And More Prosperous in A Warming World". 2021. *Global Center on Adaptation*. <https://gca.org/reports/state-and-trends-in-adaptation-report-2021/>.

⁶⁵ "Malala Fund Publishes Report on Climate Change and Girls' Education | Malala Fund Newsroom". 2022. *Malala Fund | Newsroom*. <https://malala.org/newsroom/archive/malala-fund-publishes-report-on-climate-change-and-girls-education>.



Under subcomponent 3.a, climate change activities will be integrated under:	
1.	<u>Strengthening group norms and capacities:</u> The insights gathered from mapping climate vulnerabilities under subcomponent 1.b. will be integrated into targeted activities to strengthen climate-vulnerable groups' adaptation to climate shocks and stressors. Each target community will identify Climate Community Champions who will serve as the community's focal points on resilience and adaptation planning.
2.	<u>Delivering a package of social and life skills:</u> A core focus will be on climate-sensitive trainings as the livelihood groups, alongside cooperatives, associations, and individual entrepreneurs in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, will be provided a module on "Women's Businesses in Climate-Sensitive Sectors." This module will consist of trainings on climate-smart adaptation measures due to changing rainfall patterns, post-harvest storage and food preservation to better tackle food insecurity, and climate-smart technologies.
3.	<u>Gendered and climate-sensitive market assessment and business plans:</u> A gendered and climate-sensitive market assessment will be conducted in the implementing counties to explore key climate risks and impacts and to identify opportunities, like climate-resilient livelihoods, to strengthen women's resilience to future climate shocks. This assessment will inform the menu of climate sensitive/smart women-led livelihood investments to be supported under the project. This will be the initial step in improving target areas' adaptation processes and promoting women's voice and agency in community efforts to strengthen local resilience. For example, an outcome of this assessment could be training women to serve as early warning weather monitors, increase their access to climate information and promoting their inclusion in community responses to climate challenges.
4.	<u>Mentoring and support for business plan development and implementation:</u> All business plans developed by livelihood groups will be climate informed. The business plan development process will consist of a mandatory participatory climate risk assessment, which will outline the business plan's climate risks and integrate a climate mitigation and/or adaptation measure to address the identified climate risks. The participatory climate risk assessment will bring together technical scientific data on climate change and implications for women's livelihoods with women's knowledge on observed changes at the local level and strategies they have used to adapt livelihoods. By identifying and strengthening measures like this in the climate risk assessment, each business plan will be climate-informed with integrated climate-resilience measures rooted in scientific data and local knowledge
Integrated Climate Change Activities under subcomponent 3.b (US\$18 million)	
Under subcomponent 3.b, climate change activities will be integrated under:	
<u>Grants for Women-led Livelihoods:</u> This project will allocate 60 percent of total livelihood grants financing for climate-informed business plans, which are informed by gender and climate sensitive market assessment (under subcomponent 3.a) to climate investments. Each livelihood group can submit a climate-informed business plan proposal on a sliding scale up to \$5,000 and 80 percent of activities funded will support climate resilient/climate-smart agricultural investments. All business plans will also be screened for climate risks. This climate screening will look at climate risks, mitigation measures, sustainability, and energy efficiency to ensure that all investments are energy efficient and sustainable in the long run. Examples of funded climate investments under the climate-informed business plans could include: solar-powered cold store for fish to increase fish preservation for processing, transitioning to climate-adapted crop, livestock, and fishery varieties, efficient water storage and harvesting techniques in the case of droughts or floods, and energy-efficient cooking stoves for post-production.	
Component 4: Strengthening Public Institutions to Advance Gender Equality (US\$4 million)	
Integrated Climate Change Activities under subcomponent 4.a	



Under subcomponent 4.a, climate change activities will be integrated under:	
1.	<u>MEAL Systems</u> : A core focus will be to expand sex-disaggregated data collection processes to capture climate-risk metrics on women's and men's access to and use of natural resources, early warning systems, and inclusion in climate change mitigation and adaptation decision-making processes.
2.	<u>Gender and Social Development in MoA</u> : A core focus will be to launch a qualitative agriculture survey, consisting of dimensions on the differentiated impacts of climate change on men and women, awareness of sustainable agriculture and climate-proof agriculture production systems, and access to climate-smart agricultural technologies and extension services.
Component 5: Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation (US\$3.6 million)	
Integrated Climate Change Activities under subcomponent 5.b	
Under subcomponent 5.b, the knowledge management will integrate the following climate dimension:	
1.	<u>Knowledge Management</u> : Under knowledge management, a core focus will be to assess the climate initiatives supported by the project and their success rate.