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GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA  
MINISTRY OF GENDER, CHILDREN, AND SOCIAL PROTECTION



**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**Executive Summary & Strategic Priorities**  
**July 1, 2016– June 30, 2021**

## Forward

This Strategic Plan (2016-2021) starts off from a perspective that Liberia's greatest opportunity for development is in its people. Getting them to attain their full potential is the core business of the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MGCSP). An estimated 53% of our population falls between the ages of 16 and 64 years—the most productive period in their life cycle. About 44% are children 15 years old and below and have just begun their life's journey. The forecast is for an additional 151,000 citizens every year as our population grows from an estimated 4.75 million on January 1, 2016 to 5.1 million by January 1, 2021—the period covered by this Strategic Plan. Our life expectancy is also rising incrementally—despite the setback caused by the outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease in 2014. Unfortunately slightly more than 8 out of every 10 Liberians is struggling and can be classified as vulnerable in one form or another.

Herein lies the enormous task faced by the government and people of Liberia. With very limited resources, we must accelerate the human development process and turn the tide on poverty, vulnerability, victimization, stigmatization, and discrimination. We must also remove barriers to individual progress and empower women and girls, especially, with the means to fully participate in our progress. While we remain respectful of those social and cultural practices that make us uniquely Liberian, we must be equally resolute in removing all those that are inimical to efforts to go forward and to protect our children.

Over the short-term, our demographic and economic trends point to continuing high dependency ratios and other political, social, and economic challenges. But this government is committed to ensuring that the changes embodied in the new policy frameworks, the reform of our governing institutions and arrangements, the reform of our constitution, and other new legal instruments and protocols will over the long term lead to a more safe, secure and equal environment for all Liberians, female and male alike.

This Strategic Plan is our first major effort to integrate all the components drawn together by the Act creating the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection. It establishes the basis to go from framework formulation to execution, from a focus at the center to greater focus on service delivery at local levels where the people reside, from policy design to making impact and measuring those results.

I would like to thank all those who provided support and/or participated in the preparation of this plan. A special word of appreciation goes to our key international partners—United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Women, and the United Nations Children Fund for technical guidance and financial support in the preparation process.

Finally, I call on all stakeholders to commit to producing the results outlined in this plan over the next 5 years. On behalf of the government, let me assure you of our sincerest appreciation and esteem of your high levels of interest, engagement, and support.

Hon. Julia Duncan-Cassell  
**MINISTER**

## Acknowledgements

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- Cleophas Torori, Deputy Country Director Programme
- Nessie Golakai
- Hannah Karbo, National Gender Analyst

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

The Act creating the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MGCSP) became law on October XX, 2014. The key intent of the law is to combine the mandates and functions of the erstwhile Ministry of Gender Development and the Department of Social Welfare-- previously a part of the Ministry of Health; thereby repealing and amending the relevant sections of Executive Law Title 12 as well as related Executive Orders. Responsibility for Social Protection, a new area previously falling within the sphere of activity of the erstwhile Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs, was also added to the mandate. The Act consolidates a broad range of social, economic, and governance issues and situates the responsibility for leadership of related policy and program interventions, and for service delivery, under one central entity. Finally, the Act reduced to some degree the duplication between Ministries, Agencies and Commissions (MAC) of the government.

Coming with this expansive cross-cutting mandate is the responsibility of duty bearer for the domestication of several international conventions ratified by the Government of Liberia. These include: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its related instruments including UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC); the AU Protocols on Women and Children, UNSCR 1325 on Women Peace and Security; and the Beijing Platform for Action. The newly-created Ministry is also mandated to advise Government on all matters affecting participation in the political space, and the social and economic development, of women and children as well as any other related matters referred to it.

This Strategic Plan therefore is an expression of what the government realistically expects to accomplish over the next five years—given the measured challenges, opportunities, aspirational policy instruments, and the likely resource envelope. It transforms the aspirational aspects of the Act into a cogent and actionable framework that can drive policy execution and service delivery going forward. It also draws the various components of the new ministry into a more fully integrated institution which can function as one.

## Demographic Trend

The estimated population of Liberia on January 1, 2016 was 4.75 million—with a fairly even gender distribution (50.3 percent male and 49.7 percent female).<sup>1</sup> At the current growth rate, the population increases by 413 person daily or by approximately 151,000 per year. This is an annual increase of 3.18 percent. Total population is expected to rise to between 5.1 and 5.4 million by 2021—the end of this Strategic Plan period.

The sex ratio of the population was 1.011 (1.011 male per 1 females) which is slightly lower than global sex ratio (1.016 male per 1 female). The dependency ratio is very high. At 90%, each working person must provide support for his/herself and provide for a child or a

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<sup>1</sup> Based on UN Demography and Statistics data, October 2015; <http://countrymeters.info/en/Liberia>

dependent elderly person. Even so, with an estimated 53 percent falling between the ages of 15 and 64<sup>2</sup>, the untapped productive potential offered by this highly youthful population is enormous.

## Human Development Trend

Using the current estimated population, about 3.2 million Liberians are income poor--US\$0.67 per day per person or \$242 per year.<sup>3</sup> At the US\$1.90 per day World Bank international poverty threshold, the number rises to approximately 3.8 million. Liberia's 2014 Human Development Index (HDI) stood at 0.412--below an average of 0.493 for countries in the low human development group and below the average of 0.502 for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Neighboring Guinea and Sierra Leone ranked 179 and 183 respectively. Relative to all other countries, Liberia ranked 177 of 187.<sup>4</sup>

### Situation of population groups falling within MGCSP areas of responsibility

MGCSP's has a broad demographic, sectoral, and cross-cutting mandate. The faces of the poor and vulnerable are more likely to be those of a female, a rural-dweller, a disabled, a child or elderly headed household, an orphan and other vulnerable child, and the aging.<sup>5</sup> The recent Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) has added the survivors to the list of the vulnerable. About 75 percent of those infected during the EVD outbreak were female.

Women vulnerability is rooted in structural and cultural factors. Women are more likely to be victims of coerced sexual encounters and since men are more likely to have multiple sexual partners, their female partners are at higher risk for infection. For example, women HIV prevalence rate is higher at 1.8% than men at 1.2% in an overall prevalence rate of 1.5% in the population. Within the 15-24 years age group, HIV prevalence rate is three times higher from women than for men.<sup>6</sup>

Women were disproportionately represented in low-skilled, low-paying jobs and the wage gap between male and female persist. And though there are few differences in demographic composition of male and female headed households, when the head of household has completed secondary level education (high school), consumption levels are higher than in households where the head has not completed high school.<sup>7</sup> According to the 2007 Liberia Demographic and Health Survey, overall literacy of adult women is 41% compared to 70% for men. When disaggregated by location, rural vs. urban, literacy rate of adult women is only 26%.

Participation in education decreases substantially after the 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. At 18 or older, youths are more inclined to transition to the labor force. Girls are at a high risk of dropping out due to teen pregnancy, but boys are also at high risk of dropping out of school without employable skills, credentials, or other qualifications to acquire employment.

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<sup>2</sup> IBID

<sup>3</sup> Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2008

<sup>4</sup> UNDP, 2014 Human Development Report

<sup>5</sup> National Social Welfare Policy Revised, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> MGCSP and National Aids Commission; Agenda for Accelerated Country Action for Women, Girls, Gender Equality and HIV

<sup>7</sup> GOL, Liberia Poverty Note, Nov 2012

Children are likely to be profoundly affected by disruptions in family structure. Only one-third (33.5 percent) of children live with both parents. Household social cohesion was severely disrupted by the civil war but was on the mend. Because of a precipitous decline in living standards, as a consequence of the EVD outbreak, households are again under stress.<sup>8</sup> Access to education has improved considerably over the last 10 years. School attendance among those between the ages of 6-14 years is rising. Nevertheless, starting at 14 years, children reportedly start to drop out of school to provide for themselves and contribute to the family welfare. This effectively shifts the earning and contributing years of the life cycle to the middle of the adolescent period.

Vulnerable population groups (children, women, elderly, and persons living with disability) tend to be overrepresented among those living in extreme poverty and have limited access to basic services and economic opportunities. Marginalization and exclusion from services, community activities, and productive opportunities increase the risk of falling into extreme poverty groups.

The WHO estimates that at least 10% of any population lives with a form of physical disability.<sup>9</sup> A 1997 pilot survey conducted by the Center for the Rehabilitation of the Injured and Disabled (CRID) place the proportion in Liberia at 16% of the population.<sup>10</sup>

People 64 years old and above comprise about 3 percent of the total population. Liberia does not have a universal statutory social security for elderly people. The only form of old-age protection available is the contributory labor-based National Pension Scheme for formal sector workers managed by the National Social Security and Welfare Corporation (NASSCORP). In 2013, total contributions amounted to US\$23.2M by 1,250 entities on behalf of 97,342 employees, whereas benefit payments totaled US\$3.6M to 6,834 beneficiaries, of which 62 percent constituted old age retirement payments.

## Interventions

Liberia remains highly aid-dependent. Official Development Assistance (ODA) was expected to reach US\$785 million in the 2012/13 fiscal year; compared to a budget outturn of US\$647 million.<sup>11</sup> For the 2012/13 fiscal year ODA expenditure was 52% of GDP. Therefore, seeking alignment with donor priorities will continue to be a critical aspect of social policy and programs.

The *Agenda for Transformation (AfT)* is the five-year development strategy of the government covering the period 2012 to 2017. Now in its mid-term, the AfT defines the initial sets of activities leading to the *Liberia Rising 2030* which in turn outlines the broad developmental aspirations of the country. Social Welfare as part of social protection falls under Pillar III (Human Development) of the AfT. While interventions for women, children, the elderly, and PWD's fall under Pillar V (Cross-cutting Issues).

The **National Gender Policy** (2010 to 2015) preceded and informed the formulation of the AfT. The policy serves “as a framework and guideline in mainstreaming gender and empowering women and vulnerable groups in the national development process”. Now in its

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<sup>8</sup> Amara Konneh, Economic Recovery Note, September, 2014

<sup>9</sup> WHO, **World report on disability, 2011**, [http://www.who.int/disabilities/world\\_report/2011/report/en/](http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report/en/)

<sup>10</sup> Liberia CRID, National Needs Assessment of the Injured and Disabled, August, 1997, UNDP

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Finance and Development Planning; *Mid-Year Development Assistance Report*, Apr 2014



midterm, the framework is being reviewed concurrently for possible mid-course adjustments. Other guiding instruments have been listed above.

The **National Social Welfare Policy** (2011 to 2021) is a component of the National Health and Social Welfare Policy covering the same period. The main policy objectives are, *et al*, to broaden social assistance and insurance coverages over a 10 year period and to migrate from a highly centralized to a decentralized client-centered delivery system.

The **National Social Protection Policy**, developed in 2012 with support from aid partners, called for a multi-sectoral approach to supporting and financing social protection interventions—given the widespread vulnerability. While specific interventions were to be supported by aid partners, the government focused its attention on broader categorical elements such as abolishing school fees in public schools, support for school feeding programs, and providing free health care. Six other domestic legal instruments that have not been repealed and six international conventions signed by the Government of Liberia provide the comprehensive framework for legal action on gender, children, and social welfare issues.

Partners in the UN system support the government efforts through Joint Programs on Sexual and Gender Based Violence, Food Security and Nutrition, Gender Equality and Women Economic Empowerment, Young Women and Men Economic Empowerment, Rural Women Economic Empowerment, and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2013-2017), now under review, outlines the support to the government priorities. The World Bank provides funding for planning and for social cash transfer interventions. As part of its peace monitoring obligations, the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) used its presence to gather, collate, and share information on SGBV, SEA, human rights, and children issues, etc. at the local level.

## Delivering on the promises and commitments

**W**hile MGCSP has a lead responsibility, 9 other Ministries, Agencies, and Commissions (MACs)—and one public corporation; still have complementary mandates and their service delivery can impact the wellbeing of the targeted groups. Additionally, a network of interest groups, other nongovernmental actors, and donor-supported projects provide multiple services and benefits under different (sometimes ill-defined) entitlement rules to diverse target groups. More entities and groups are expected to emerge as the implementation arrangements for the various policy instruments are rolled out during this strategic plan period. Over the next five years, a well-coordinated approach and a more effective service delivery system at the subnational level will be critical to producing the desired outcomes defined in the various framework documents.

### Limitations

Two challenges limit the ability of the MGCSP and the network of interest groups to achieve greater impact among service consumers with available policy and legal tools—i) inadequate capacity to execute policy and strategy and ii) general resource scarcity. On the former, the MGCSP (and its predecessor the MGD) has been very effective in identifying, engaging, and managing relationships with stakeholders to produce results in the policy and legal arenas. It

has not been as effective, however, in putting into place accountability mechanisms for policy outcomes and results, for service delivery, and for financial and physical assets.

Furthermore, the strategic planning exercise demonstrated that, as is characteristic of many Ministries and Agencies (M&A's) of Government, there is a high degree of concentration on transactional activities as opposed to policy design/formulation and implementation across a national perspective—while taking into consideration regional differences. All analyses and assessment processes including the departmental strategic planning workshops, capacity assessment focus group discussions with key Informants (KI), the SWOT provided strong indication of this characteristic. Additional, KI found that “knowledge and knowledge retention, understanding concepts, unpacking them, and utilizing them to drive policy and strategies were areas that required strengthening.” Going forward, the addition of new areas of responsibility (with 300+ office, project, and field-based staff) will task weak systems even further.

On the latter challenge, the total resource envelope proposed for the 2015/16 fiscal year of the government is US\$2.8 million—US\$1.4 million of which is off budget support from a specific international partner. International partners are expected to contribute an additional US\$7.1 million through direct project support. This is the equivalent to a proposed yearly per capita expenditure of US\$2.66 for each targeted beneficiary.

### **Way Forward**

The MGCSP Strategic Plan 2016-2021 starts off from a perspective that Liberia's greatest opportunity for development is in its people. Therefore, improving MGCSP's ability to effectively leverage donor support and partnerships to create a broad social protection framework covering the life cycle of all target groups should present a key strategic goal moving forward. The prospects of a much larger resource envelop coming from government revenues over the life of this strategic plan are highly unlikely given the Governments strong reliance on natural resource rents and the global projections of commodity recovery periods.

Furthermore, the strategic planning process offered the opportunity to further the organizational and staffing realignment that should lead to an improvement in service delivery at the sub-national level (leveraging partnerships) and a more integrated institution driving policy implementation from the national level. Additional strengthening of monitoring and evaluation systems and improved reporting measures will address critical capacity gaps while improving the ability to present the case for more support.

In view of the foregoing, the vision, mission, goals, and strategic priorities for the July 2016 to June 2021 period are defined as follows.-



## MFDP Mandate, Vision, Mission, Goal Statement, and Strategic Priorities

**MANDATE** The mandate of the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection is well articulated under the Act of October 2011. It is to lead policy development, program formulation, and coordinate service delivery as it relates to the empowerment and protection of women, girls, and children; and integration of the marginalized, excluded, vulnerable, and the physically challenged into the broader developmental processes so that they benefit from peace, stability, and socio-economic advancement

**VISION** The vision is to bring about a more just, humane, and equitable society where the full potential of all citizens—irrespective of gender, age, ethnic background, physical ability or income; can be fully realized and harnessed for self-improvement and for rapid development.

**MISSION** The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection is established to promote inclusive growth, ensure equitable access of all persons to the outcomes of development and good governance with special emphasis on the disadvantaged, victimized, and marginalized population groups (which now comprise the vast majority of the Liberian population--given the current social, cultural, and economic contexts).

### **GOAL STATEMENT (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2021)**

Starting July 2016 and extending over the next 5 years, the MGCSP will accomplish the following:

- Ensure the domestication of all international conventions and protocols into local laws, conventions, and protocols and set into place the systems to monitor and report on progress towards producing their desired outcomes
- Make policy formulation and execution more coherent, timely, and relevant to the local contexts at subnational levels
- Broaden domestic and international partnerships for advocacy, more effective service delivery, and more secure funding streams around priority areas

## Office of the Minister

The function of the Office of the Minister is to

<p><b>AfT Pillar</b>  <b>III,V</b></p>	<p><b>Priority Objective:</b>  Establish a more positive image with various publics while building a relatively well-resourced institution fully capable of fulfilling its mandate, sufficiently flexible to form and deliver results through productive partnerships, and robust enough to deal with new situations within its ambit as and when they emerge</p>	<p><b>Intended Output 1:</b> A more coherent and all-inclusive central institution that can drive policy formulation and execution, form productive partnerships with internal and external stakeholders, and that can effectively coordinate service delivery around gender and children issues, and on the welfare of vulnerable groups by 2021</p> <p><b>Intended Output 2:</b> A more informed and proactive network of stakeholders advocating for issues falling within MGCSP mandate areas by 2021</p> <p><b>Intended Output 3:</b> More secure and consistent funding streams for priority areas by 2021</p>
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## Department of Research, Policy, and Planning

The function of the Department of Research, Policy, and Planning is to

<p><b>AfT Pillar III,V</b></p>	<p><b>Priority Objective:</b></p> <p>Strengthen evidence-based policy formulation and programming on the international commitments and on inclusion, equality, and vulnerability</p>	<p><b>Intended Output 1:</b> More informed decision making on gender equality and women empowerment, children protection and development, poverty and vulnerability supported by a comprehensive M&amp;E system and annual M&amp;E work plans (starting Dec 2016); and a cloud based database management information system installed and rolled out by Jun 2017 and a resource center by Jun 2018</p> <p><b>Intended Output 2:</b> Domestication of international commitments and public awareness raised through periodic reporting on all commitments (UDHR, CRCC, ACRWC, CEDAW, PLWHA, and Res 1325), publication of gender map and women empowerment index, and IEC materials on SDG's as they become due</p> <p><b>Intended Output 3:</b> The impact of policy and legal instruments better understood and used for future refinements, targeting, and updating through mid-term and final evaluations done annually as they come due and a final review of the achievements made under Pillar V of the AfT to inform and incorporate findings into the successor national development framework by Jun 2018</p>
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## Department of Children and Social Protection

The function of the Department of Children and Social Protection is to

<p><b>AfT Pillar</b></p> <p><b>III,V</b></p>	<p><b>Priority Objective:</b></p> <p>Expand the ownership and adoption of commitments contained in the national social policy frameworks to subnational, community, and family levels so that service delivery and protection becomes more responsive to the local context</p>	<p><b>Intended Output 1:</b> The total number of children classified as vulnerable is halved by 2021 through preparedness, prevention, response, and reporting mechanisms developed in all counties, children’s rights included in school curricula by Jul 2018; and through vigorous and ongoing training and staff upgrading</p> <p><b>Intended Output 2:</b> A comprehensive national social protection floor policy combining social services and income transfers built and providing coverage to at least half of the population in need of protection; with special emphasis on the poor and vulnerable by Jun 2021; and reflected in the successor framework to the AfT Pillars III and V in 2018</p> <p><b>Intended Output 3:</b> International commitments on children’s rights and protection and people living with HIV/AIDS and disability are fully domesticated and in force and public awareness level raised on the content of these instruments; with periodic reporting as and when they come due, finalization of the adoption law by Jun 2017; and administrative and advocacy structures functional by Jun 2018</p> <p><b>Intended Output 4:</b> Vulnerable groups actively participating in community activities and incrementally meeting a large portion of their own livelihood needs; revitalizing the National Commission on PWD, expansion in the policy of PWD to include EVD survivors, collaboration with security sector agencies to design and set into place an incident tracking system disaggregated by counties</p>
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# Department of Gender

The mission of the Department of

<p><b>Aft Pillar</b></p> <p>III,V</p>	<p><b>Priority Objective:</b></p> <p>Sustain the addition of gender-inclusive interventions into national policy instruments and domestication of international conventions and protocols related to women participation and empowerment; while improving the capacities of communities and families to cope with gender-based violence</p>	<p><b>Intended Output 1:</b> National and local stakeholders are able to design and deliver gender-specific outcomes in , infwith the National Gender Policy (NGP) ensuring that women and men gain meaningfully from development progress; the review and adjustments of the NGP completed by Mar 2017; directives on gender mainstreaming developed and circulated by Jun 2017, and all components of the institutional arrangements for the NGP in place and functional by Jun 2019</p> <p><b>Intended Output 2:</b> International commitments on women’s rights and gender equality are fully domesticated and in force and public awareness level raised on the content of these instruments through periodic reporting as the come due, media-driven IEC, and the Domestic Violence Act Passed and fully in force by Jun 2021</p> <p><b>Intended Output 3:</b> Income security improved for 5,000 women and girls by 2021; and knowledge on land and inheritance rights increased- achieving the targets of the business development skills program, increased membership and participation in recurrent local community training and advocacy events</p> <p><b>Intended Output 4:</b> Women are more broadly represented in political leadership and decision making bodies, in the judiciary, in local administrative structures, and in business leadership attaining a 50% increase above the current baseline by 2021</p> <p><b>Intended Output 5:</b> Improved coordination and monitoring of interventions targeting adolescent girls through a revitalized and expanded working group, improved information dissemination, AGD mainstreamed into policy instrument, awareness raising, functional safe houses, and increased utilization of AGD monitoring tool by Jun 2021</p>
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# Department of Administration

The mission of the Department of Administration is to

<p>Aft Pillar III,V</p>	<p><b>Priority Objective:</b> Ensure all MGCSP departments have the appropriate levels of resources through continual staff re-profiling and professional development, optimal use of financial and physical resources made available within the budgetary framework, and the provision of appropriate logistical support services while championing the implementation of the FY 2016 to 2021 strategic plan</p>	<p><b>Intended Output 1:</b> A pool of professional and talented employees recruited with on boarding procedures completed, and a performance planning and staff appraisal and reward system developed, adopted, and rolled out across all departments by the end of FY 2017/18</p> <p><b>Intended Output 2:</b> Business processes and protocols to improve internal control, reduce waste, abuse, and fraud collated and compiled into an operational manual by Jun 2017</p> <p><b>Intended Output 3:</b> A conducive and sanitized work environment regulating movement of customers, employees, and visitors and completion of movement to new location by Dec 2016</p> <p><b>Intended Output 4:</b> Well-organized business and work flow processes set into place with a full migration to IFMIS, a fully compliant annual financial report, and HR, GS, IT, and procurement processes captured in the operational manual by Jun 2018</p> <p><b>Intended Output 5:</b> Informed business decision making based on systems, forms, formats to track operations and to generate periodic reports on administrative activities and progress of the strategic plan in place by Jul 2016 and updated annually</p>
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