

**GOVERNMENT OF LIBERIA'S INITIAL REPORT
TO THE AFRICAN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE
CHILD**

**PURSUANT TO THE PROVISION OF ARTICLE 43 OF THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON THE
RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD**

Introduction

It is known worldwide that fourteen years of civil war led to widespread child abuse: the use of children as combatants and sex slaves, sexual violence and torture. In addition, education and health systems were completely broken, including the limited infrastructure which was left in ruins. For almost two decades, the vicious war left an entire generation denied of the opportunity to realize their full potential. Despite this difficult experience, with the end of the civil war, and intensive development efforts, much has been achieved for children in Liberia. Peace has been consolidated and the physical and social landscape being transformed. Basic mechanisms have been revitalized as indicators for child survival and access to basic services including health and nutrition interventions, safe drinking water and sanitation and education have essentially improved.

In the recent six years, the Government of Liberia has successfully written off its huge external debt, thus reaching the High Indebted Poor Countries Completion point in 2012. The country has completed its 2008-2011 Poverty Reduction Strategy and is nearing finalization of the new national vision document as well as Medium Term Growth strategy which is the Agenda for Transformation through Action (ATTA) 2012-2017.

The Children law, which has been approved and launched by the President of Liberia, marks a firm commitment on behalf of the Government of Liberia to the domestication of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Sector policies and plans have been adopted in several key child-focus areas including education, social welfare, and health. Other guiding documents are under development, including the national youth policy and the nation's first social protection policy. While there is still much work to be done, there is no doubt that the future of Liberia's children is better than it has been decades ago.

Part 1: GENERAL MEASURES OF IMPLEMENTATION

8. Under this section, State Parties are requested to provide relevant information pursuant to Article 1 of the Children's Charter, including information on:

a) necessary steps undertaken, in accordance with their Constitutional processes and with the provisions of the Children's Charter, to adopt such legislative or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to the provisions of the Children's Charter.

A key legislative measure to give effect to the children's charter adopted by the state, has been the Children's Law which was introduced into the House of Representatives and passed in 2008. It was passed by the Upper House of Senate on September 15, 2011 and subsequently launched by the President of Liberia, Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf on February 4, 2012. The law domesticates the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) to which Liberia is a signatory as well as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), including the cardinal principles of the best interest of the child, non-discrimination and participation.

b) Measures taken to realize the rights and welfare of the child in the law of the State Party or in any other international convention or agreement in force in that State.

The Children's Protection Division at the Ministry of Gender and Development which became operational in 2005 and upgraded to the status of a division is mandated to ensure the protection of children's rights at national and county levels, advocate for child rights, advice government of matters relating to children, coordinate programmes on child wellbeing and monitor child rights violations.

In addition, the division monitors the implementation and reporting of international conventions and protocols by all agencies and institutions responsible for the survival, development, protection and participation of children. Some of the international protocols that are used by the government are: UNCRC, CEDAW, UNSCR 1325 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. Additional domestic laws and policies used for the rights and welfare of children include:

- The Act to Ban Trafficking in persons within the Republic of Liberia of 14 June 2005, called the Anti Tracking Law;
- The Children's Law
- Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities;
- the National Policy of Girls Education

c) Measures taken to promote positive cultural values and traditions and to discourage those that are inconsistent with the rights, duties and obligations contained in the Children's Charter.

- a) *The Children's Law* enshrines the principle of non-discrimination as a complementary principle to the best interests of the child in the interpretation and implementation of the law, stating that:

no decision or action shall be taken whose result or likelihood is to discriminate against any child on the basis of sex, family, colour, race, ethnicity, place of origin, language, religion, economic status, parents, or any other status;

- b) *The Education Reform Act of 2011* also has a major focus on provision of equal and non-discriminatory access to education. The Ministry of Education is currently leading a process for consultations on policy direction and measures for inclusive education.
- c) *The Children's Law* contains a full section (Section 4) on the rights of children with disabilities including the right "to enjoy a full and decent life," special care conducive to full integration and individual development. It also stipulates the duties of the local authorities to seek appropriate support from the central government to assist the families and caregivers of children with disabilities. As a complement to the Children's Law, an amendment has been proposed to *the Penal Code*, making discrimination on the basis of the child's disabilities or ethnicity a felony of second degree.
- d) In addition, one of the major steps taken was the ratification of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* in August 2012.

d) Existing or planned mechanisms at the national or local level for coordinating policies relating to children and for monitoring the implementation of the Children's Charter.

The Ministry of Gender and Development (MOGD) has a mandate to coordinate all national and international policies and for monitoring the implementation of international conventions and protocols on children. To

effectively carry out its monitoring responsibilities, the children's division convenes monthly coordination meeting where members of the Child Protection Network (CPN) meet to discuss matters relevant to child protection. Members of the network are given the opportunity to report and give updates on issues and activities undertaken during that period. The CPN consists of key line ministries, local and international NGOs.

In addition, the National Youth Policy is going through the approval process and Adolescent Girls Unit has been formed at the MOGD to coordinate programs and policies related to girls and young women.

9. In addition, States are requested to describe the measures that have been taken or are foreseen to:

a) Make the principles and provisions of the Children's Charter widely known to adults and children.

Members of the Child Protection Network, including line ministries and agencies as well as members of Civil Society Organizations have made it a policy to refer to provisions in instruments such as; the UNCRC, UNCER ACRWC and the Children's Law of Liberia when creating awareness on child rights or referring to issues of child wellbeing.

Part XI section 1 of the Children's Law provides for the establishment of a Child Rights Advancement Fund to be managed by the Ministry of Gender and Development subject to the Revenue Code and any other financial laws and regulations that Government has in place. The purpose of the fund will be to provide education on child rights and correlative duties of child wellbeing. When this fund is established, it will substantially help to create more awareness on various child rights instruments.

The government is in the process of preparing the Simplified Version of the Children's Law that will be disseminated in all of the counties. In addition, the Child Welfare Officers and Committees have been established to assist in this process as well as monitoring child rights violations.

The Ministry of Gender and Development will every quarter of the year make any necessary grants to child clubs or any civil society organizations involved in child rights education in Liberia.

b) Widely disseminate their reports to the public at large in their own countries.

The Ministry of Gender and Development has a mandate by law to ensure the implementation and dissemination of reports on the implementation of international instruments, as such the ministry will work with civil society organizations and international partners to ensure that the report is disseminated to the general public. For example, the government works along with the CPN to disseminate the various reports throughout the country.

III. DEFINITION OF THE CHILD

10. States Parties are requested to provide information, in conformity with Article 2 of the Children's Charter, regarding the definition of a child under their laws and regulations.

The definition of a child is reflected in all of the laws relating to children. For example, the Children's Law and the New Rape Law define a child as anybody below the age of 18.

IV. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

11. Relevant information, including the principal legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures in force or foreseen; factors and difficulties encountered and progress achieved in implementing the provisions of the Children's Charter, and implementation priorities and Specific goals for the future should be provided in respect of:

a) Non-discrimination (Articles 3 and 26)

The Children's Law stipulates the principle of non-discrimination as a complementary principle to the best interest of the child in the interpretation and implementation of the law which states that "no decision or action shall be taken whose result or likelihood is to discriminate against any child on the basis of sex, family, color, race, ethnicity, place of origin, language, religion, economic status, parents, or any other status;"

The Education Reform Act of 2011 also has a major focus on provisions of equal and non-discriminatory access to education. The Ministry of Education is currently leading a process for consultations on policy direction and measures for inclusive education.

The Children's Law contains a full section (section 4) on the rights of children with disabilities including the right "to enjoy full and dignified life," special care conducive to full integration and individual development. It also stipulates the duties of local authorities to seek appropriate support from central government to assist the families and caregivers of children with disabilities. As a complement to the Penal law, an amendment has been proposed to the Penal Code, making discrimination on the basis of the child's disability or ethnicity a felony of the second degree.

b) Best interests of the child (Article 4)

Article II section 2 of the Children's Law provides "in all decisions and actions that may affect the child, the best interest of the child shall be the paramount consideration. This principle shall underlie and guide the interpretation of this law, subject to the constitution, its impact on other laws."

c) The right to life, survival and development (Article 5)

Article III of the Children's Law provides, "Every child shall have the right to survival."

Liberia has made immense progress in ensuring child survival. It has made noticeable efforts in reducing child mortality, passing from 227 deaths per 1000 living births in 1990 to 103 deaths for 1000 living births in 2010.

Maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT) was successfully eliminated. MNT elimination activities took place in Liberia over three years (2006-2008) and a total of 850,000 women and child bearing age were targeted in this endeavor. No polio cases were reported in 2011. The immunization coverage increased to 77% in 2011 compared to 39% (as measured by the DTP3) in 2007 and measles and pentavalent coverage was consistently maintained above 90%.

RED (Reaching Every District) and REPW (Reaching Every Pregnant Woman) approaches were launched to address child morbidity and mortality in all the 15 counties and ensure equitable access to delivery of basic health services for all children and women in Liberia. A road map for accelerating the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality was developed in order to meet the MDG4 and 5 by 2015.

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has developed the National Child Survival Strategy to serve as a major component to individual-oriented clinical services for implementation of the Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS), now expanded to the Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS).

Integrated Community Case Management (ICCM) was initiated to improve case management of childhood diseases such as malaria, diarrhea and ARI at the community level. 80% of primary health care facilities in 4 of

the most vulnerable counties in the South East (Sinoe, Grand Kru, Maryland and Gbarpolu) are practicing ICCM outreach activities.

d) Respect for the views of the child (Article 7)

Article III Section 14.1 of the Children’s Law provides, “Every child shall have the right to freedom of expression subject to the following:

- Her or his evolving capacities;
- Her or his best interests;
- National security; or
- Public order, public health or morals or the rights and freedoms of other people.

“Every child shall, subject to hers or his evolving capacities have the right to seek, receive and impact information and ideas or otherwise express her or himself freely”

The Children’s Law also provides, ‘every school and local authority shall progressively facilitate the formation of children’s clubs, and other forums for the expression of views of children to advance child rights enjoyment and social justice environmental management and other matters that may be in the interest of children’.

e) Provision of information to children and promotion of their participation (Articles 4, 7 and 12)

The Children’s Law provides, “The Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism shall progressively work with the Ministry of Education to mobilize and provide information and technology for the development of knowledge and skills for children”.

As efforts to implement this right, the Ministry of Gender and Development, in collaboration with the Child Protection Network, has established Children’s clubs in some schools and communities. The ministry has also facilitated the establishment of County Children’s Representative Forums (one in each of the 15 counties). Each county forum is composed of 20 members representing the administrative districts of the county (10 girls, 10 boys), while the National Children’s Representative Forum is composed of 30 members (15 girls, 15 boys) representing the 15 counties of Liberia. The National Forum is headed by a speaker. Members of both structures are elected democratically for a period of two years. The key purpose of the forum is to ensure the participation of children in discussing issues affecting their wellbeing at. The organizations are effective in promoting and expressing the views of children.

12. In addition, States Parties are encouraged to provide relevant information on the application of these principles in the implementation of articles listed elsewhere in these guidelines.

V. CIVIL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

13. Under this section, States Parties are requested to provide relevant information, including the principal legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures in force; factors and difficulties encountered and progress achieved in implementing the relevant provisions of the Children's Charter and implementation priorities and specific goals for the future in respect of:

a) Name, nationality, identity and Registration at birth (Article 6)

Article III section 4.1 of the Children’s Law provides, “Every child shall have a name that is not humiliating or degrading to the child except where these names are based on cultural and traditional practice”. Section 4.2 “Every child shall have to have her identity preserved.”

According to MICS and DHS, birth registration rate in Liberia in 2008 was 4% for children aged 5 and below, with the registration focused primarily in urban Montserrado County because of limited access to the rest of the fourteen counties.

In 2012, the Government of Liberia, with support from UNICEF started a Universal Birth Registration programme aimed at capacity building and decentralized birth registration. As of 2012, the Government estimated that the rate has been increased to 9%, covering all fifteen counties of which 6% percent are in urban areas and 3% in rural communities.

Currently, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has a policy whereby all children below 5 years receive birth certificates free of charge while those above the age 5 pay a minimum of US \$7.00 to cover the entire cost for processing and certificate.

Traditional birth attendants are being taught to carry of initial birth registration in rural communities and places where there are no hospitals, clinics or health centers.

b) Freedom of expression (Article 7)

Article III section 14.1 of the Children's Law provides that "Every child shall have the right to freedom of expression subject to the following:

- Her or his evolving capacities ;
- Her or his best interest;
- Parental guidance;
- National security; or
- Public order, public health or morals or rights and freedom of other people.

The Children's Law also provides for the formation of children's representative forum at town, district, county and national levels. The function of town children representative forum is to ensure that the views of children and young people are heard and acted upon to advance the realization of child rights.

In respect of the section, the Ministry of Gender and Development, in collaboration with the Child Protection Network, including line ministries has constituted various children organizations (County and National Children Representative forum and children clubs across the country).

c) Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 9)

Article III section 15.1 of the Children's Law stipulates that, 'every child shall have the right to thing freely and adopt any religion subject to the following matters:

- The child's evolving capacities;
- Parental and other appropriate guidance;
- Her or his best interest;
- National security; public order, public health or morals, or the rights and freedom of other people.

d) Freedom of association and of peaceful Assembly (Article 8)

Article III, section 16.1 of the Children's Law guarantees to every child the right to freedom of association subject to the following:

- Her or his evolving capacities;

- Her or his best interest;
- Parental guidance;
- National security, public order, public health or morals or the rights and freedom of other people.

The Children's Law mandate the Ministry of Education to facilitate the formation of children's clubs and other forums for the expression of views of children to advance child rights enjoyment and social justice, environmental management and other matters that may be in the interest of children.

e) Protection of privacy (Article 10)

Article III, section 18.1 guarantees every child the right to have her or his privacy protected. The protection of this right is extended to publicity which places the child in a false light in the public eye.

However, as stipulated in section 18.2, parents, teachers, social workers and other service providers shall not be prevented from carrying out their rightful duties or professional functions in the protection and general wellbeing of the child.

f) Protection against child abuse and torture (Article 16)

Article III, section 21.1 guarantees the child the right to be protected from sexual abuse and exploitation including prostitution and pornography.

While the Women and Children Protection Sections of the Liberia National Police were established and have been functioning since 2006, the Children's Law institutionalized the roles and duties of these units to investigate and handle cases of sexual violence, abuse, exploitation, domestic violence, criminal allegations against children and other cases requiring police protection for any woman or child. Women and Children Protection units also have a duty of providing and seeking temporary safe places for women or children who have or in danger of suffering violence, exploitation, or abuse.

VI. FAMILY ENVIRONMENT AND ALTERNATIVE CARE

14. Under this section, States Parties are requested to provide relevant information, including the principal legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures in force, particularly how the principles of the "best interests of the child" and "respect for the views of the child" are reflected therein: factors and difficulties encountered and progress achieved in implementing the relevant provisions of the Children's Charter and implementation priorities and specific goals for the future in respect of:

a) Parental guidance (Article 20)

Article III, section 6.1 and 6.2 of the Children's Law guarantees the right of every child to appropriate parental guidance, and that every parent shall provide guidance to her or his child in a manner that is consistent with the child's evolving capacities.

b) Parental responsibilities (Article 20.1)

Article IV, section 1.3 of the Children's Law provides every parent shall have an equal duty with co-parent to:-

- ensure the best of the child are the bases for parent's decision or action;
- promote the growth and educational and other development of the child;
- prevent disease, facilitate safety, and seek and comply with professional advice for the wellbeing of the child;
- safe guide and promote the child's health, development and participation encouraging the child's participation in household decisions and actions, subject to the evolving capacities;

- e. provide, consistent with the child's evolving capacities, direction and guidance for the child's best interest;
- f. raise any child in her or his household as of equal dignity irrespective of sex;
- g. respect the child's dignity and refrain from administering domestic discipline that violates such dignity or adversely affects the psychosocial or physical well-being of any child living in the household;
- h. exercise parental rights with the expressed or implied of other persons having similar rights for the upbringing of the child, subject to the child's best interest;
- i. Take any other decision or action that advances the wellbeing of the child.

c) Separation from parents, separation caused by State Party, separation caused by internal displacement arising from armed conflicts, (Articles 19.2& 3 civil strives, or natural disasters and 25)

Article VII, section 5.1 of the Children's Law guarantees that, "the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare shall work with the international community, civil society organizations and government, and public agencies and service providers to provide access to basic social welfare and services for refugee and internally displaced children." Section 5.2 requires that, "the Ministry responsible for social welfare shall facilitate as much as possible then reunification of accompanied or similarly situated children with their families.

At the moment, the Liberia Repatriation, Reunification and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) has the mandate to work with the international community in addressing issues caused separation and internal displacement arising from armed conflicts, civil strives or natural disasters.

d) Family reunification and children deprived of a family environment (Article 25.2(b))

Since the establishment of the commission, the Liberia Repatriation, Reunification and Resettlement Commission (LRRRC) has been effective in working with the international community and local civil society organizations to address the issues of family reunification of children deprived of family environment.

There is presently a Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) which was organized to discuss and handle emergency issues related to children affected by the Ivorian crises. The CPWG is comprised of government line ministries, the international community and civil society organizations. It is chaired by the Ministry of Gender and Development and co-chaired by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

e) Maintenance of the child (Article 18.3)

Article III, Section 5.1 provides, "Subject to the best interest of the child, every child shall have the right to know and to be cared for her or his biological parents. Section 5.2 provides that every child shall have the right to have contact with her or his biological parents, if not living with such parent. Section 5.3 guarantees that the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare shall have the power to act as mediator in child support cases, taking into consideration Penal Code Section 16.55 regarding persistent non-support and Domestic Relations law Section 5.4 granting court's jurisdiction over support proceedings. If a mediated solution cannot be found, such a case shall be forwarded to courts of competent jurisdiction.

Prior to the promulgation of the Children's Law, the Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) of the Liberia National Police, and the Ministry of Gender and Development have been mediating cases of persistent non-support at national and county levels. Those that cannot by mediated have been referred to the courts for support proceedings.

f) Adoption and periodic review of placement (Article 24)

To regulate domestic and inter-country adoption, a draft bill was finalized and submitted to the House of Representatives in 2012. The proposed legislation, if passed will update and amend the relevant sections of the Domestic Relations law with respect to adoption in compliance with international standards. While Liberia has not yet ratified The Hague Convention on Inter-country adoption, the draft law is compliant with key Hague principles and special attention to issues of informed consent, which has presented serious problems in the past.

In 2009, a moratorium was placed on inter-country adoption by the President of Liberia which she said will remain in place until an enabling framework is established for regulating inter-country adoption. Since the suspension went into effect, the Liberian Government has formed the Ad-hoc Adoption Authority which provides oversight and monitors adoption cases. The Ad-hoc Adoption Authority established in 2009 replaced the Commission on Adoption established in 2008.

Meanwhile, an Adoption Unit has been established in the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare with a coordinator and three social workers trained to conduct case investigations prior to submission of cases to the Ad-hoc Central Authority.

g) Abuse, neglect, exploitation including physical and psychological recovery and social integration (Articles 16 and 27)

Article III, Section 21.1 of the Children's Law stipulates, "Every child shall have the right to be protected from sexual abuse and exploitation including prostitution and pornography.

- a) With the support from UN Agencies, the Government has achieved some key results in the period of 2008-2012, including development of a Mental Health Policy and comprehensive psychosocial training manual, establishment of psychosocial community networks and recruitment of counselors and increased access to psychosocial support services for 513 girls, boys, and women who were survivors of sexual and gender based violence.
- b) The Government has also revised and extended the *National Action Plan for Prevention and Management of Gender Based Violence, 2011-2015*, with a separate pillar for psychosocial support issues. The revised Plan envisages provision of holistic psychosocial support services to victims of violence in all 15 counties through recruitment and training of 2 counselors for each county, nationwide awareness raising on gender based violence and its psychosocial consequences, and building of 30 safe homes for survivors of violence and abuse.
- c) In the framework of the UN Joint Program on Gender Based Violence, an endowment fund has been established to provide support to survivors of gender based violence. The funds were distributed to the 15 counties. Committees comprised of representatives from the Superintendent's Office, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Gender and Development and civil society were established in all 15 counties to oversee and ensure transparent distribution of funds.
- d) The Sexual and Gender Based Violence Crimes Unit established in 2009 is also providing victim support services to women and children and the expansion of the unit is envisaged in 2012 to Gbarnga, Bong County, to cater for 3 counties and provide victim support services.

- e) The Ministry of Justice, Judiciary, UN agencies and NGOs have been actively engaged in disseminating the amendments of the Penal Code and creating awareness and building capacity among all concerned actors regarding its application.

15. In addition, States Parties are requested to provide information on the numbers of children per year within the reporting period in each of the following groups, desegregated by age group, sex, ethnic or national background and rural or urban environment: homeless children, abused or neglected children taken into protective custody, children placed in foster care, children placed in institutional care, children placed through domestic adoption, children entering the country through inter-country adoption procedures and children leaving the country through inter-country adoption procedures.

Since September 2009, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, with support from UNICEF and USAID, has been implementing a programme aimed at the deinstitutionalization of children and promotion of family care.

3,637 (1,918 boys and 1,719 girls) are currently living in 88 functional orphanages. This is a decrease from **5,000** children estimated to be in institutional care by the June 2008 inter-agency monitoring report. Since 2009, **637** non-orphans (366 boys and 271 girls) living in orphanages have been reunified with families or relatives. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare is conducting follow up visits to confirm that children are back and living with their families. The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, with support from UNICEF, has also established a National Management Information System data base for alternative care

16. States Parties are encouraged to provide additional relevant statistical information and indicators relating to children covered in this section.

VII. HEALTH AND WELFARE

17. Under this section, States Parties are requested to provide relevant information, including the principal legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures particularly programmes and projects, etc.; the institutional infrastructure for implementing policy in this area, particularly monitoring strategies and mechanisms; factors and difficulties encountered and progress achieved in implementing the relevant provisions of the Children's Charter, in respect of:

a) Survival and development (Article 5)

Article III of the Children's Law states, "Every child shall have right to life"

Liberia has made noticeable progress in reducing child mortality, passing from 227 deaths per 1,000 living births in 1990 to 103 deaths for 1000 living births in 2010. Maternal and neonatal tetanus (MNT) was successfully eliminated. MNT elimination activities took place in Liberia over three years (2006 to 2008) and a total of 850,000 women of child bearing age were targeted in this endeavor. No polio cases were reported in 2011. The immunization coverage increased to 77% in 2011 compared to 39% (as measured by DTP3/Penta3) in 2007 and measles and pentavalent coverage as consistently maintained above 90%.

RED (Reaching Every District and REPW (Reaching Every Pregnant Woman) approaches were launched to address child morbidity and child mortality in all the 15 counties and ensure equitable access to and delivery of basic health services for all children and women in Liberia. A road map for accelerating the reduction of maternal and neonatal mortality was developed in order to meet the MDG 4 and 5 by 2015.

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare has developed the National Child Survival Strategy to serve as a major component to individual-oriental clinical services for implementation of the Basic Health Services (BPHS), now expanded to the Essential Package of Health Services (EPHS)

Integrated Community Case Management (ICCM) was initiated to improve case management of child hood diseases such as malaria, diarrhea and ARI at the community level. 80% of primary health care facilities in 4 of the most vulnerable counties in the South East (Sino, Grand Kru, Maryland and Gbarpolu) are practicing ICCM outreach activities.

b) Children with handicap (Article 13)

Article VII, section 4.1 of the Children's Law guarantees that the child with disabilities shall have the right to enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions that ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community or town.

Section 4.2 guarantees that every child with disabilities shall have a right to special care in a manner that is conducive to the child achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development.

Section 4.3 of Article VII stipulates local government authorities with appropriate support from central government shall provide to children with disabilities and those responsible for their care free appropriate assistance to ensure that such children has effective access to and receive education, training, health services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in an environment that physically and socially friendly.

Section 4.3 guaranteed that every child with disabilities shall access and benefit from an exclusive education system offering education that is responsive and supportive to the child's learning needs and talents in a participative and non-discriminatory manner.

In 2009 the Education Sector Plan for Liberia for 2010 to 2020 was developed. It addresses issues of access, quality, disparity, gender balance, planning, management and governance and financing education. By providing indicators and targets for the abovementioned, the sector plan acts as a guideline for the Ministry of Education and education agencies. The plan consequently resulted in the funding of US \$ 40 million from the Education for All-Fast Track Initiative (Catalytic Fund).

An Education Sector Policy (ESP) has been developed and is currently pending consultations with the Education actors at the county level. The plan has also seen the incorporation of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) training as part of teacher training curriculum in Rural Teacher Training institutions (RTTI) and the implementation of ECCD comprehensive policy (2011). Through the ESP, 3RTTIs have been rehabilitated and furnished. The ESP (2009) has identified a need to build schools to meet the needs of children with disabilities which prevent them from accessing mainstream schooling. Construction of these schools has not yet commences.

c) Health and health services (Article 14)

Article III section 8.1 of the Children's Law guarantees the every child shall have access to medically necessary health care.

Section 8.2 guarantees that the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare shall work with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and local Government authorities and other ministries to devise and implement programs that result in the progressive decline of malnutrition, child and parental deaths. Section 8.3 provides that the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare shall work with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other ministries, non-governmental organizations, and other service providers to ensure the delivery of reproductive health services through regular clinics, hospitals and other centers.

d) Social security and child-care services and facilities (Article 20.2(a-c))

Article X, section 13.1 of the Children's Law provides, "the person registered to operate an institution shall ensure that the design, size and location are compatible with the statement of purpose of the institution. Without prejudice to the generality of this duty, the person registered to operate an institution shall ensure that:-

- a. the location of the institution takes into account the proximity to education, health, leisure, and transport facilities;
- b. Where the institution accommodates a child with disabilities, there are suitable aids and adaptations to the physical and other environment to enable such children as comfortable as possible;
- c. there is no compromise in the provision of quality care and respect of privacy as a result of the design of room and other amenities in the institution;
- d. effective precautions are in place for the security of the children and staff in the institution; and
- e. There are promoted links between the institution and community members in the surrounding environment.

The Government of Liberia is currently drafting its first National Social Protection policy and strategy, which will include a range of programming goals to protect, preserve and promote the country's most vulnerable families. The policy will outline the government's commitment providing a basic social protection floor, though the specific details of that package will be agreed in the coming years.

Government is presently carrying out social cash transfer programs in two of the country's most impoverished counties of Bomi and Maryland counties. The program is targeting poor and labor constrained households by providing them monthly cash payments. A key objective of the program is to ensure that children living in those vulnerable households are encouraged and empowered to go and remain in school and to improve the economic condition of the targeted household. Close to 2000 children are currently benefiting. The Government of Liberia and UNICEF are key sponsors of the program.

f) Care for orphans (Article 26)

- a. Following the launch of regulations on alternative care standards by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in 2012, a National Independent Accreditation Committee (IAC) was established to oversee and guide the selection of credible institutions providing alternative care services for vulnerable children.
- b. Out of the 88 alternative care institutions (orphanages) that remain in the country, all have applied for accreditation. The IAC has accessed 35 institutions and accredited 10, while the rest were instructed to undertake relevant measure to comply with the standards.

- c. Since September 2009, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, with support from UNICEF and USAID has been implementing programming aimed at deinstitutionalization of children and promoting foster care.
- d. The Children's Law provides a clear framework and standards for alternative care institutions and foster care arrangements and regulations in line with the principles of the best interest of the child and preference for family care. The Children's Law establishes the government's obligation to conduct semi-periodic review of child placements.
- e. The government has begun discussions on designing and piloting a foster care system and arrangements

18. In addition to information provided under paragraph 8(d) of these guidelines, States Parties are requested to specify the nature and extent of cooperation with local, national, regional and international organizations, concerning the implementation of this area of the Children's Charter. States Parties are encouraged to provide additional relevant statistical information and indicators relating to children covered in this section

VIII. EDUCATION, LEISURE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

19. Under this section, States Parties are requested to provide relevant information, including the principal legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures such as projects, programmes etc.; the institutional infrastructure for implementing policy in this area, particularly monitoring strategies and mechanisms; factors and difficulties encountered and progress achieved in implementing the relevant provisions of the Children's Charter, in respect of:

a) Education, including vocational training and guidance (Article 11)

The *Education Reform Act* was adopted in 2011. It governs and regulates the educational system and the delivery and management of the system to ensure the provision of quality education to all citizens, promote equal access to educational opportunities and decentralize the educational system. In order to support the budgetary needs of the interventions for the Ministry of Education, the Act provides for allocation of 60% of the signatory fees coming from mining companies to the Ministry of Education.

The Children's Law provides as follows for education in Article III Section 9:

- a.** MOE shall progressively make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity and ability;
- b.** shall progressively work with local government authorities to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates;
- c.** shall progressively work with local government authorities through the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other ministries to devise and implement programs and measures to provide early childhood education, including pre-schools;
- d.** Shall ensure that the teaching of child rights is included in the curriculum for teacher training and primary and secondary schools.

Article V, SECTION 2.1 stipulates that subject to the best interest of the child and parental guidance, every member of a child's extended family shall have the authority to render guidance and advice to the child. Section 2.2 provides that the guidance of the child from parents, relatives, and service providers shall include the use of tradition and cultural standards to foster the development of a sense of responsibility in the child, subject to her or his evolving capacities.

The Ministry of Gender and Development, with support from the Child Protection Network and UNICEF has begun the reactivation and establishment of informal community child protection systems known as Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) across the country. In the meantime, we have reactivated 100 CWCs in each of these seven counties (Bomi, Gbarpolu, Grand Cape Mount County, Montserrado, River Gee, Maryland and Grand Kru). A committee is composed of 9 to 10 members and headed by a chairperson. The functions of community or town Child Welfare Committee are limited to advice, mediation, recommendation and representation. The overall function of a CWC is to advance the realization of the rights of the child at the county level.

The Ministry of Youth and Sports has established the Monrovia Vocational Training and the Bureau of Domestic Occupational Training Centers which provided vocational training in various disciplines prior to the war and was immediately reactivated following the end of the 14 years civil war.

b) Leisure, recreation and cultural activities (Article 12)

Article III, SECTION 13.1 of the Children's Law guarantees children the right to leisure, play and recreation.

Section 13.2 requires the Ministry of Youth and Sports to progressively work with local government authorities through the Ministry of Internal Affairs and other ministries to provide and maintain accessible, safe, and acceptable recreational centers and facilities for communities and towns,

Article VI, SECTION 1 provides, "a parent, teacher, and person responsible for providing guidance and direction to the child shall provide to the child guidance and education that promote the following values:

- a. the child's own and current future wellbeing;
- b. respect for parents and adults;
- c. the wellbeing of others, her or his family, society, his or her country, and humanity in general;
- d. the child's pride in her or his culture and national identity;
- e. the value of the family and marriage;
- f. Any other value that instills in the child a proper sense of responsibility.

20. In addition to information provided under paragraph 8(d) of these guidelines, States Parties are requested to specify the nature and extent of cooperation with local, national, regional and international organizations, concerning the implementation of this area of the Children's Charter. States Parties are encouraged to provide additional relevant statistical information and indicators relating to children covered in this section.

IX. SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

21. Under this section, States Parties are requested to provide relevant information, including the principal legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures such as projects, programmes etc.; factors and difficulties encountered and progress achieved in implementing the relevant provisions of the Children's Charter and implementation priorities and specific goals for the future in respect of:

a) Children in situations of emergency:

(i) Refugee, returnee and displaced children (Articles 23 & 25)

Article XII, section 5.1 of the Children's Law states, "the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare shall work with the international community, civil society organizations and government and public agencies and service providers to provide access to basic social welfare and services refugees and internally displaced children.

Section 5.2 stipulates that the Ministry responsible for social welfare shall facilitate as much as possible the reunification of unaccompanied or similarly situated children with their families.

Presently, the Child Protection Network (CPN) has established an inter-agency Child Protection Working Group (CPWG) that is comprised of key child protection agencies including the Ministries of Gender and Development, Health and Social Welfare, UNICEF, Save the Children-UK, UNHCR, IRC, LRRRC, etc to work with relevant national and international agencies in addressing the issues of refugee children. The working group which is chaired by the Ministry of Gender and Development has played pivotal role in addressing the emergency needs of Ivorian Refugee children living in the neighboring counties of Nimba, Grand Gedeh, Maryland and River Gee.

(ii) Children in armed conflicts, including specific measures for child protection and care (Article 22)

The Children's Law has introduced an explicit prohibition on recruitment of children and their use in armed conflicts. It states in Article 22.1 that "every child shall have the right to be protected from involvement in armed or any other violent conflicts. The Ministry of Defense, according to the Children's Law shall not recruit or conscript any child into military service, and shall ensure that the army does not use landmines and other weapons described by the international law adverse to children.

b) Children in conflict with the law:

Article IX, section 3.1 of the Children's Law guarantees that "a child shall not be subjected to pre-trial detention, including remand, unless all other measures for dealing with the child pending trial have been exhausted."

Section 3.2 states that "at all stages of the investigation and prosecuting a crime involving a child, diversionary measures shall be considered, with the advice and facilitation of probation officers, social workers, or other appropriate service providers."

Section 3.3 guarantees that "the imprisonment of a child shall only be in cases where there would be no other to correct the child."

Section 3.6 states also that "the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare shall take measures to ensure that juvenile delinquents in whose respect a juvenile or other court has made an order the Juvenile court procedural code are appropriately integrated into family and community life.

Section 3.7 guarantees that "the Juvenile Court Procedural Code and any other laws or rules relating to the administration of justice in cases where a child is alleged to have committed a criminal offense shall be construed to balance the best interest of the child and responding to the needs of any alleged victim."

The Women and Children Protection Section has been established within the Liberia National Police to serve as first contact point for children coming in contact with the Justice system. The section is composed of well trained staff of women and men adequately versed in managing juvenile cases.

(i) The administration of juvenile justice (Article 17)

A juvenile, under the Juvenile law, is a child who is under the age of 18 years. And the age of criminal liability is 16. A "juvenile delinquent" is a juvenile who has attained the age of seventeen but is under the age of 18 years. While there are no plans envisaged to raise the age of criminal liability, the death penalty has been

abolished under the Children's Law: Article 3.2 states "No law shall be valid if requires the execution of any form of killing of a child."

Since 2009, the capacity of the one and only Juvenile court has been strengthened through filling of all required positions. The court currently has 5 probation officers and social workers in addition to a clerk, sheriff, and 3 bailiffs. The Juvenile Judge, probation officers, and social workers have received comprehensive training in the country and abroad.

While no additional Juvenile courts have been established, the Government, through the Judiciary has envisaged in the framework of Joint Justice and Security programmes to build 3 magisterial and 2 circuit courts in Bong, Lofa and Nimba Counties by 2013 taking into consideration the specific requirement of confidentiality and privacy in matters of juvenile hearings, including in-camera facilities.

The Ministry of Justice has started the construction of a Juvenile Reform facility in Montserrado County to ensure all juveniles are treated in a manner as prescribed by the Juvenile Procedural code and the Children's Law, which states that the imprisonment of a child be an issue of last result and only in adequate serviced facilities of rehabilitative and educative nature, separated from adult detainees.

(ii) Children deprived of their liberty, including any form of detention, imprisonment or placement in custodial setting and compliance with the provisions of Article 5(3) of the Children's Charter prohibiting death sentences on children (Article 17.2(a))

Article IX, section 3.4 of the Children's Law further states that "No person shall use unreasonable restraint or force against a child unless the child poses imminent threat of injury to him or herself or others."

Section 3.5 States that "Corporal punishment, placement in a dark cell, closed or solitary confinement, or other punishment that may compromise the physical or mental health or well-being of the child concerned are hereby prohibited."

(iii) Reformation, family reintegration and social rehabilitation (Article 17.3)

c) Children of imprisoned mothers:

Article XII, section 6.1 of the Children's Law states:

"No expectant mother or a mother of a child below the age of 5 shall be imprisoned with her child. If necessary, the confinement of a convicted expectant mother or a mother of a young child shall be in a separate prison facility with her child where the child can continue to enjoy the nurture of her or his biological mother, including, where appropriate, being breastfed by such mother. Where there is no such facility, in the best interest of the child, the child shall be placed in a caregiver facility."

(i) Special treatment to expectant mothers and to mothers of infants and young children who have been found guilty by law (Article 30)

Although no special treatment has been prescribed for expectant mothers and mothers of infants who have been found guilty by law, the Children's Law however guarantees that expectant convicted mothers shall be placed in a separate facility where she can continue to attend to her child with convenience.

(ii) A mother shall not be imprisoned with her child (Article 3(d))

Article 6.1 Of the Children's Law guarantees that "No expectant mother or mother of a child below the age of 5 shall be imprisoned with her child. If necessary, the confinement of a convicted mother expectant mother or a mother of a young child shall be in a separate prison facility with her child where the child can continue to enjoy the nurture of his or her biological mother, including where appropriate, being breastfed by such mother. Where there is none such facility, in the best interest of the child, the child shall be placed in a caregiver facility."

(iii) Reformation, integration of the mother into the family and social rehabilitation (Article 30(f))

d) Children in situations of exploitation and abuse:

Article III, Section 21.1 of the Children's Law guarantees every child the right to be protected from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and exploitation including prostitution. The law further mentions in Section 21.2 that 'Provisions of the Penal law and other legislations whose intent is to protect the child from sexual exploitation shall be construed with the child's best interest as the primary consideration.'

With support from UN Agencies, the Government has achieved some key results in the period 2008-2012, including the development of a mental Health Policy and Comprehensive Psychosocial Training manual, establishment of psychosocial community network and recruitment of counselors and increased access to psychosocial support services for 513 girls, boys and women who were survivors of sexual and gender based violence.

The Government of Liberia has envisaged and extended the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Management of Gender-Based Violence, 2011-2012 with a separate pillar for psychosocial support issues. The revised plan envisages provision of holistic psychosocial support services to victims of violence in all 15 counties through recruitment and training of 2 counselors for each county, nationwide awareness raising on gender based violence and its psychosocial consequences and building of 30 safe homes for survivors of violence and abuse.

In the framework of the UN Joint Program on Gender Based Violence, an Endowment fund has been established to provide support to survivors of gender based violence. The fund was distributed to the 15 counties. Communities comprised of representatives from the Superintendents' offices, the Ministries of Health and Social Welfare, Justice, Gender and Development, and the civil society were established in all 15 counties to oversee and ensure the transparent distribution of the funds.

The Sexual and Gender based violence Unit was established in 2009 by the Ministry of Justice has a mandate for providing victim support services to women and children and the expansion of the unit is envisaged in Bong County to provide victim support services to 3 counties.

(i) Economic exploitation including Child Labor (Article 15)

Article III, section 20.1 states: Every child shall be protected from work that and other practices that may threaten her or his health, educational, spiritual, physical, and moral development."

The Children's Law further states in section 20.2 the : A social worker or probation officer shall have the power to treat a child involved in work and other practices as described in subsection I of this section as a child in need of care under this law."

According to Chapter 16.1 of the Penal Law, “a parent, caregiver, guardian, or relative who engages in any act or connives with any other person to subject a child to sexual molestation, prohibited child labor, or such other act, that places the well being of a child at risk is guilty of a second degree felony.”

(ii) Drug abuse (Article 28)

According to Penal Law 16.6, “a parent or any person eighteen years old and above, who sells, sends a child to procure or serves alcoholic beverages, cigarettes or any narcotic or intoxicating drugs to a child or who employs a child in the sale of such beverage, cigarettes or narcotic and intoxicating drugs is guilty of a misdemeanor of the first degree.”

(iii) Abuse and torture (Article 16)

Article XII, section 7.1 of the Children’s Law states that, “No person shall subject a child to torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading punishment.”

Section 7.2 states, “Any correction or punishment of a child shall be justifiable for the child concerned.”

Section 7.3 states, “ No correction of a child is justifiable for any child if it is unreasonable in kind or in degree relative to the age, physical and mental condition of the child and no correction is justifiable if the child by reason of tender age or otherwise is incapable of understanding the purpose and fairness of the correction.”

Section 7.4 mandates the Ministry of Gender and Development to progressively facilitate parental guidance programs aimed at developing the capacity of parents to discipline and guide their children without use of any form of violence.

(iv) sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Article 27)

While the Women and Children Protection Sections of the Liberia National Police were established and have been functioning since 2006, the Children’s Law institutionalized the role and duties of these units to investigate and handle of sexual exploitation, abuse, domestic violence, criminal allegations against children and other cases requiring police protection for any woman and child.

Despite challenges in terms of limited safe homes and services, Women and Children Protection units-partnership with NGOs-continue providing services to survivors of gender based violence in 2008 to improve coordination on GBV issues. The Joint programme has been extended until 2013, while at the same time the Government of Liberia has raised and extended the National Plan for the Prevention and Management of Gender Based Violence, initially launched in 2006 until 2015. Some of the joint programme achievements to date include development of targeted manuals and capacity building of relevant staff in psychosocial support and GBV area, creation of network for men against GBV and large scale campaigns against sexual abuse and exploitation and abuse, provision of services to children and women victims of gender based violence and establishment of GBV case tracking database.

The Children’s Law introduced provisions for mandatory reporting of abuse of children. Complementary amendments to the penal code have been proposed which would make it a second degree misdemeanor for parents, caregivers, teachers, guardians, nurses or any other service providers who fail to report a case of child abuse or neglect.

Guide lines for operating the management of safe homes for survivor of gender based violence have been developed and endorsed by the National GBV Task Force under the guidance of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare.

Proposed amendments to the penal code would provide sections of third degree felony for subjecting a child to pornography or media exposure or violent nature, as well as distribution of child pornography.

(v) Other forms of abuse and exploitation such as begging, early pregnancy, etc. (Article 29(b))

Article X, section 4 of the Children’s Law provides as follows: “no person or society shall subject a child to any of the following practices:-

- a. Marrying and person when she or he is still under the age of 18;
- b. Betrothing a child into marriage or a promise for marriage;
- c. Giving over a child to work either as a means of satisfying obligations on the part of the parent regardless of whether or not the work is harmful, hazardous or indecent;
- d. Any unnecessary or uncultured practices that may inflict physical, psychosocial, or emotional pain to the child or otherwise violates or endangers her or his bodily integrity, life, health dignity, education, welfare or holistic development.

(vi) Sale, trafficking and abduction (Article 29)

Article VII, section 8 of the Children’s Law provides that, “Any person, convicted under the Trafficking Law or any penal law prohibiting the abduction or trafficking of children shall be placed on a child offender’s register and not allowed to render direct services to children.”

The Ministry of Labor and the Anti-Trafficking Task Force conducted a comprehensive situation analysis of Human Trafficking in 2010 with support from UNICEF. The report shows that human trafficking is prevalent in Liberia, both in the country and beyond its borders for different purposes including labour exploitation, organ removal and trafficking of drugs. The report says that there have been some successes in the implementation of the National Plan on trafficking, largely due to collaboration with the United Nations, NGOs and community bases actors both internally and across borders. However, these efforts have been delayed due to logistical difficulties, the absence of skilled manpower and funding and material shortages.

e) Children victims of harmful social and cultural practices affecting the welfare, dignity, normal growth and development of the child:

(i) Betrothal of girls and boys (Article 21.2)

Article X, section 4 of the Children’s Law provides as follows: “no person or society shall subject a child to any of the following practices:-

- a. Marrying and person when she or he is still under the age of 18;
- b. Betrothing a child into marriage or a promise for marriage;
- c. Giving over a child to work either as a means of satisfying obligations on the part of the parent regardless of whether or not the work is harmful, hazardous or indecent;
- d. Any unnecessary or uncultured practices that may inflict physical, psychosocial, or emotional pain to the child or otherwise violates or endangers her or his bodily integrity, life, health dignity, education, welfare or holistic development.

(ii) Early and forced marriage (Article 21.2)

The Children’s Law provides that:

“No person or society shall subject a child to any of the following practices:-

- a. marrying any person when he or she is still under the age of 18;
- b. betrothing a child into marriage or a promise for marriage
- c. giving over a child to work either as a means of satisfying obligations on the part of the parent regardless of whether or not the work is harmful, hazardous or indecent;
- d. any unnecessary or uncultured practice that may inflict physical, psychosocial, or emotional pain to the child or otherwise violate or endanger her or his bodily integrity, life, dignity, education, welfare, or holistic development.

(iii) Any form of female genital mutilation (Article 21.1(a))

a) The *Children’s Law* provides that

“No person or society shall subject a child to any of the following practices:-

- (a) Marrying any person when she or he is still under the age of 18;
- (b) Betrothing a child into marriage or a promise for marriage;
- (c) giving over a child to work either as a means of satisfying obligations on the part of the parent regardless of whether or not the work is harmful, hazardous or indecent;
- (d) any unnecessary or uncultured practice that may inflict physical, psychosocial, or emotional pain to the child or otherwise violate or endanger her or his bodily integrity, life, health, dignity, education, welfare, or holistic development.”

Related amendments have been proposed to the *Penal Code* which would make any of the above activities a second degree felony.

b) While female genital mutilation is not explicitly mentioned, the strong language above provides grounds for continued measures to address the issue.

(iv) Any other form of harmful social and cultural practices (Article 21.I (b))

In 2010, the Ministry of Gender and Development was commissioned by the President’s office to verify the operational schedule of Sande Schools (traditional initiation and education society for girls and women) in the counties that report disclosed a high prevalence of Sande Schools. The study’s finding showed that, in more than half or observed cases, the Sande schools were held during regular school period and that a significant number of girls dropped out of school after SandeSchool(37% drop out) training.

Based on the findings, the Ministry of Gender and Development recommended that in order to remove barriers for girls; education, licenses for Sande Schools operations be issued when the Sande Schools and given the girls an option to decide , while at the same time discouraging forced initiations by recommending the imposition of heavy fines. Following the launch of the above report, the Ministry of Gender and Development established a coordination mechanism with the Ministry of Internal Affairs to follow up on the implementation of the recommendations.

The Government and partners have been engaged in activities aimed at increased public awareness and knowledge about the dangers and consequences of harmful traditional practices. Examples include the Joint UN and Government of Liberia Programme launched in 2011 on Adolescent Development, in Montserrado and Gbarpolu counties, targeting young adolescent girls to empower them with life skills, services, information and

education to make informed decisions about their future. The communication component of the programme addresses the negative effects of gender based violence, HIV female genital mutilation.

g) Children belonging to a minority groups (Article 26)

g) Children who need special protection on account of being in risky or vulnerable conditions and situations such as street children or AIDS orphans (Article 26)

Article VII, section 1 of the Children's Law states: "For the purpose of this law, a child is in a situation of vulnerability if she or he is especially at risk of having her or his survival, development, participation and protection endangered."

Section 2 of the Children's Law requires the Ministry of Gender and Development to coordinate the efforts of local government authorities, private sector, and civil society and child welfare committees to address the causes of situations of vulnerability.

Section 3.1 stipulates, "The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare shall work with other ministries to develop, implement and promote public policies and programs that alleviate, mitigate and address the effects of situations of vulnerability.

h) Any other emerging or unforeseen problem (Article 26)

22. Additionally, States Parties are encouraged to provide specific statistical information and indicators relevant to the children covered by paragraph

X. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHILD

23. Under this section, States Parties are requested to provide relevant information, including the principal practices, legislative, judicial, administrative and other specific measures in force; factors and difficulties encountered and progress achieved in implementing the relevant provisions of Article 31 of the Children's Charter. The Child's duty:

- a) Towards the parents, the family and the community; (Article 31)**
- b) Towards the superiors; (Article 31)**
- c) Towards the State and the Continent. (Article 31)**

Article VI, Section 1 of the Children's Law states," A parent, teacher and any person responsible for providing guidance and direction to a child shall provide to the child guidance and education that promote the following:

- a. the child's own current and future wellbeing;
- b. respect for parents and adults;
- c. the wellbeing of others, her or his family, society, his or her country and humanity in general;
- d. the child's pride in her or his culture and national identity;
- e. the value of the family and marriage;
- f. any other value that instills in the child a proper sense of responsibility.

Section 2.2 states, "the guidance of the child from parents, relatives and service providers shall include the use of tradition and cultural standards to foster the development of a sense of responsibility in the child, subject to her or his evolving capacities."

Section 3 stipulates, ‘Subject to the child’s evolving capacities, every child shall contribute towards:-

- a. family cohesion
- b. respect for parents and other people;
- c. diligence towards studies and work ; and
- d. positive cultural values of her or his community or town.

The Ministry of Gender and Development has initiated the establishment of Community Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) to help provide guidance, advice and to instill discipline in children in communities.

XI. SPECIFIC PROVISIONS FOR THE REPORTING PROCESS

24. A State Party that has already submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child a report based on the provisions of the CRC may use elements of that report for the report that it submits to the Committee as required by the Children’s Charter. The report shall, in particular, highlight the areas of rights that are specific to the Children’s Charter.

Specific recommendations made by the UN committee

1. The full and effective implementation of the Children’s Law
2. Comprehensive review of all domestic laws
3. Develop a comprehensive national policy on children.
4. Develop a national plan of Action linked to national budget.
5. There is an urgent need to establish the National Child Wellbeing Council with a clear mandate and adequate human, financial and technical resources.

25. The report must specify the action taken by the State Party in response to any recommendations made to it by the Committee and/or the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

In response to the recommendations made by the UN committee, Liberia has under taken the following:

1. Printing of the Children’s Law into handbill ongoing, including a simplified version.
2. Committees currently reviewing domestic laws for amendments, in addition to the creation of a Domestic Violence Act. The government is also in the process of conducting consultations and review of the National Constitution.
3. Program budgets have been submitted to the Ministry of Finance, these programs will allow the Ministry of Gender and Development to provide recreational facilities for children and further support their welfare and protection.
4. Processes for the establishment of the Child Wellbeing Council, the Child Rights Education committee and the Child Rights Advancement council are ongoing.