PUBLIC PERCEPTION SURVEY ON JUSTICE AND SECURITY IN SOUTH-EAST LIBERIA

August 2013

Table of Contents

Cover photo: Two village boys and one of the interviewers during the Public Perception Survey in Murrayville Township near Greenville, Sinoe County, Liberia

Acronyms

AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
BCR	Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation
BIN	Bureau for Immigration and Naturalization
BPU	Border Patrol Unit
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EA	Enumeration Area
ERU	Emergency Response Unit
GoL	Government of Liberia
JSC	Joint Steering Committee
LISGIS	Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services
LNP	Liberia National Police
LPP	Liberia Peacebuilding Programme
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PBO	Peacebuilding Office
PPS	Probability Proportional to Size
PSO	Public Services Office
PSU	Police Support Unit
ROLI	Rule of Law Indicators
SGBV CU	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Crimes Unit
SMC	Statement of Mutual Commitments
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UNPOL	United Nations Police

1. Introduction

This survey was conducted within the framework of the 2011-2013 Liberia Peacebuilding Programme (LPP), a three-year initiative developed to operationalise the Statement of Mutual Commitments (SMC) between the Government of Liberia and the UN Peacebuilding Commission. The Statement of Mutual Commitments focuses on three key priorities: strengthening the rule of law, supporting security sector reform and promoting national reconciliation. The LPP was developed jointly by the Government of Liberia (GoL), civil society, the UN and several other international development partners. The Peacebuilding Office (PBO), based at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, coordinates the collaboration among all key actors in the area of peacebuilding, reconciliation, justice and security in Liberia.

One of the main components of the Liberia Peacebuilding Programme is the establishment of 5 Regional Justice and Security Hubs across Liberia, namely in Gbarnga, Harper, Zwedru, Buchanan and Tubmanburg. The objective of the Hubs is to strengthen justice and security through a service-centred, decentralized and holistic approach, in preparation for the drawdown of UNMIL. The Hubs will bring together the various justice and security institutions, enhancing the capacity of and coordination between the Liberia National Police (LNP)/Police Support Unit (PSU), Bureau for Immigration and Naturalization (BIN)/Border Patrol Unit (BPU), Bureau of Corrections and Rehabilitation (BCR) as well as the Judiciary, i.e. prosecutors, public defenders and judges. The Regional Hubs are intended to enhance access to justice and security for the citizens of the respective counties. A Public Services Office (PSO) will be established in each hub to conduct outreach campaigns to communities and provide referral services. A dedicated Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Crimes Unit will also be set up in each of the hubs.

In order to measure progress in a systematic manner, comprehensive baseline surveys and subsequent follow-up surveys are critical. The baseline surveys assess the perceptions of the population regarding justice and security matters in the respective counties covered by the Hubs prior to the actual roll-out or strengthening of specific services. This study covers a range of key aspects, not only limited to the Hubs, in order to get a comprehensive picture of people's views on various issues regarding justice and security. In addition, 'administrative data' is collected to determine the current justice and security capacity and services in place, for example through indicators such as the number of LNP/PSU and BIN/BPU staff deployed in the counties, the number of criminal cases adjudicated per court term, etc. The first baseline public perception survey on justice and security was conducted by the PBO in Bong, Lofa and Nimba, the 3 counties covered by the Gbarnga Regional Hub, from 25 June to 7 July 2012 prior to the Hub's operationalization. The Gbarnga Hub was officially opened by the President of Liberia in February 2013.

This report presents the findings from the public perception survey in the 5 counties to be covered by the Zwedru and Harper Regional Justice and Security Hubs, namely Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, River Gee, Grand Kru and Maryland. These counties are in the South-East of Liberia, which as a country is divided into a total of 15 counties (see Annex I). The survey particularly focused on citizens' perceptions in the following areas:

1) Security situation in communities;
2) Public confidence in, responsiveness and performance of security service providers;
3) Access to justice, confidence in and performance of justice service providers;
4) Awareness of the Regional Justice and Security Hubs.

2. Methodology

2.1 Survey Sample

A random multi-stage stratified cluster sampling method was used for the survey to ensure the findings are representative of the population at the county level. The total sample size consisted of 1,200 interviews, considered sufficient to provide statistically representative results and allow for meaningful comparisons. The number of male and female respondents in urban and rural areas to be interviewed was determined in proportion to the overall population size per county, the ratio of male-female and urban-rural residents according to the latest available data from the 2008 Population and Housing Census conducted by the Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS).

Figure 1: Map of randomly selected Enumeration Areas (EAs) where the public perception survey was conducted in the 5 counties of Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, River Gee, Grand Kru and Maryland, Liberia
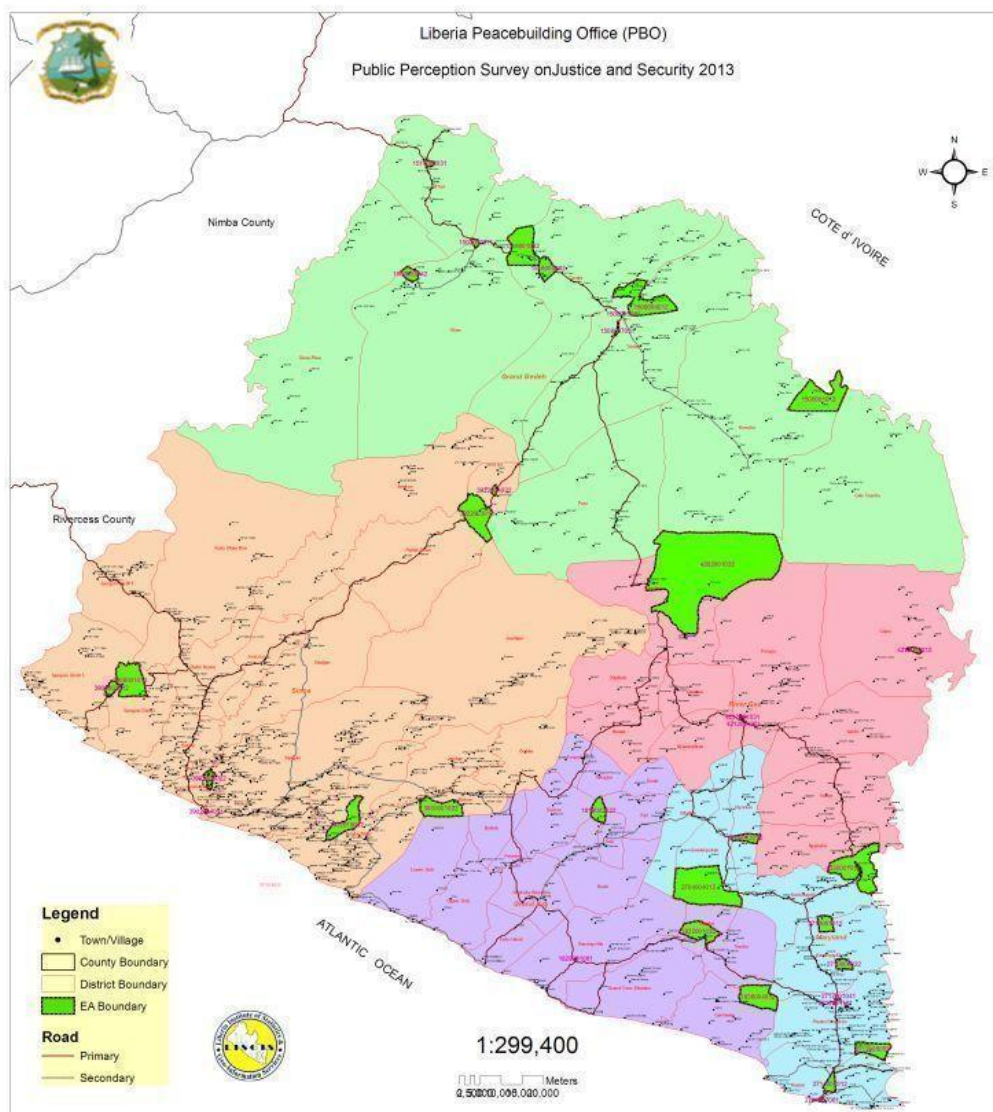
As primary sampling units, a total of 36 Enumeration Areas (EAs) were randomly selected, reflecting the population size of each county relative to the total population of the 5 counties combined. Figure 1 provides a map showing the randomly selected EAs. For clarification it is worth noting that in Liberia all districts are divided into administrative units called clans. In urban areas clans are often referred to as 'communities'. These clans/communities are further sub-divided into Enumeration Areas, each of which usually comprises 80 to 120 households. All EAs have been assigned specific geographic codes that identify them uniquely in terms of their geographical location or placement within the clans/communities, district and counties.

Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) was used as a sampling technique. This commonly applied method ensures that those households in larger sites (EAs in this case) have the same probability of being included in the sample as those in smaller sites, and vice versa. This method also facilitates planning for fieldwork, because a pre-determined number of respondents is interviewed in each randomly selected EA, and teams of interviewers can be dispatched accordingly.

At the next stage, households were selected in the respective EAs. Upon entering the area, the interview teams counted and listed all the households (defined as a group of people normally sleeping under the same roof and eating together). As part of the household listing a unique code was assigned to each household by marking the doorpost, as is usually done for the census and other large surveys. Subsequently, a skip interval was determined by dividing the total number of households in the EA by 35, the estimated number of interviews to be conducted per team per day. For example, if there were 100 households in a specific EA, then 100 divided by 35 would give a skip interval of 3 (2.9 rounded off), meaning that someone in every third household would be interviewed. The team would go to the first household listed, subsequently to the fourth, then the seventh, and so on until 35 interviews had been conducted in that particular EA. Annex II shows the total number of persons interviewed by Enumeration Area, Clan, District and County.

The last step of the sampling strategy was the selection of respondents. Upon entering the selected household, interviewers identified the members eligible to be interviewed according to 3 criteria: the person had to be 18 years or above, living in the household for at least 6 months, and not be sick or suffering from any condition that might prevent him/her to participate in the interview. If several household members were present and meeting the 3 criteria, then interviewers randomly selected 1 person according to a standard agreed procedure [1]. Where necessary, follow-up visits ('call-backs') were made by interviewers in case none of the household members was present during the first visit.

Before starting the research, letters were sent by the Minister of Internal Affairs to all County Superintendents to notify them about the public perception survey and request their cooperation in informing the local authorities in the respective counties about the content and timing of the survey. During the field work, in each of the EAs the team leader informed the local authorities (e.g. town chiefs, local government officials), explained the purpose of the survey and obtained approval for conducting the interviews. According to good research practice informed consent was obtained from each selected household respondent before starting the interview, ensuring adherence to key principles of confidentiality and anonymity.

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[1] The random selection procedure entailed the interviewer writing the names of all eligible household members on separate pieces of paper, shuffling these and throwing them on the floor or on a table. Subsequently 1 piece of paper was picked randomly and the person whose name was written on that paper would be interviewed.

Interviewers clearly noted the informed consent by way of signature on the cover page of the questionnaire. No monetary or material incentives were offered to participate in the interviews.

The survey was designed and coordinated by the Peacebuilding Office (PBO) in Liberia, with technical support provided by LISGIS. Based at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the PBO was established in January 2009 as the Secretariat to the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in Liberia. The PBO supports the Joint Steering Committee (JSC), co-chaired by the Government of Liberia and the UN, to oversee and coordinate the implementation of the Statement of Mutual Commitments and the Liberia Peacebuilding Programme. The PBO coordinates the collaboration among all key actors in the area of peacebuilding, reconciliation, justice and security, including the various Government institutions and agencies, civil society organisations, UN Agencies and donors. In addition, the PBO has been providing technical advice and support in the area of programme planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. In March 2013 the PBO M&E Unit developed a Concept Note setting out the objective, proposed methodology and work plan for the perception survey. This Concept Note was shared for comments with the Justice and Security Technical Advisory Group and Board, and subsequently finalized.

To make optimal use of available expertise and to further enhance national capacity, the PBO entered into a collaboration agreement with LISGIS to provide a number of technical support services for this particular survey. Since LISGIS has 15 county field offices and a pool of relatively experienced interviewers, cartographers and data entry clerks from the various counties, these were sub-contracted for the fieldwork and the subsequent entering of data. Therefore, this reduced time and transaction costs, while enhancing value for money, because the PBO did not have to engage in a lengthy process to recruit all the required interviewers and data entry clerks since these were already available, although a rigorous, tailor-made training was still necessary. LISGIS also provided technical advice in designing the sampling framework, printing of detailed EA maps (by the GIS Department), developing a data entry interface and generating a set of basic tables for further in-depth data analysis by the PBO.

2.2 Research Instruments

Indicators for the survey were drawn from the LPP Strategic Performance Management Framework [2] as well as the Results Frameworks for the Zwedru and Harper Regional Justice and Security Hubs. Based on the identified indicators specific questions were subsequently formulated. In order to make these as clear as possible, most of the questions were formulated in Liberian English and grouped into four main sections while ensuring a logical sequencing of all the questions. To maximise synergies it was decided to include a certain number of questions related to relevant indicators used in the 2011 UN Rule of Law Indicators (ROLI) survey [3] and the 2011 'Talking Peace' survey conducted by the Human Rights Center (HRC) of the University of California, Berkeley - School of Law [4].

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[2] Liberia Peacebuilding Programme (LPP), 2011, p. 22-26.
[3] For more detailed information see http://www.unrol.org
[4] Note that several questions on perceptions of security, security providers and access to the police in the HRC questionnaire were originally included in the '*Patterns of Conflict and Cooperation in Liberia*' survey conducted by IPA (Innovations for Poverty Action) and Yale University in Lofa, Nimba and Grand Gedeh in 2009 and 2010. See https://www.poverty-action.org/sites/default/files/liberiapatternsofconflict-yaleipa.pdf

When administering the survey, response options for specific questions were not read to respondents by the interviewers in order to avoid any bias. However, an exception was made for a few questions where a scaling method (Likert scale) was applied and respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a particular statement, and the different options were indicated in advance (e.g. strongly agreed, agreed, somewhat agreed, not agreed, not agreed at all).

Based on an analysis of various options, paper questionnaires were used for data collection rather than electronic devices like smart phones, mainly for cost-efficiency reasons. In addition, currently most interviewers in Liberia still have limited experience with such devices, and there is a likely risk of technical problems, e.g. limited coverage in most remote areas. Any devices would have had to be purchased and interviewers trained. However, for any follow-up surveys specific electronic devices, such as smart phones or Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), might be considered based on a clear value-for-money analysis.

The average time for administering the questionnaire was 23 minutes per interviewee. It was decided to keep the questionnaire limited to 61 questions in order to avoid too lengthy interviews possibly resulting in 'respondent fatigue' and perhaps sub-optimal results.

Most enumerators were familiar with the local languages in the five counties. Overall, 94% of the interviews were conducted in Liberian English, whereas in 5% of the cases the questionnaire was mostly administered in Grebo, specifically in some parts of Maryland, River Gee and Grand Kru.

2.3 Data Collection, Entry and Analysis

From the existing pool of interviewers and field office staff, LISGIS shortlisted 35 people who participated in a comprehensive four-day training in Zwedru from 15 to 18 April 2013. The training, facilitated by the PBO M&E Unit and LISGIS, focused on explaining the objective and content of the survey, the methodology, the questionnaire, and applying practical interview techniques. The training included mock interviews and pilot-testing of the questionnaire with randomly selected individuals at non-sampled sites in the vicinity of the training venue in Zwedru. After the pilot-testing the questionnaire was slightly revised to ensure optimal clarity and contextualisation, and subsequently printed for the data collection phase.

Out of the 35 training participants a total of 25 interviewers and 5 team leaders were selected based on the following criteria: experience, accuracy, interview skills, language skills, clear handwriting, timeliness and familiarity with the respective counties as well as the local languages. A competitive process was deliberately applied to ensure the best people would be selected for the field work. Those who were not selected could act as back-up interviewers in case of any unexpected drop-outs during the data collection phase, although this did not happen. Team leaders were identified on the basis of merit and performance during the training. Two female and three male team leaders were selected. A total of 5 teams were formed on the last day of the training, making sure the teams - as much as possible - were balanced in terms of male-female interviewers and their familiarity with the respective county and the local languages.

For the data collection phase a detailed work schedule was developed, including all responsibilities of the interview teams, maps indicating all the EAs to be covered by the survey, the targeted number of interviews per day, and the overall quality assurance process. After each day of fieldwork, team leaders held debriefing sessions with their team to discuss work progress, resolve any issues and plan the next day's work. Four Field Coordinators, including three from PBO and one from LISGIS, provided overall supervision and quality control during the data collection phase from 20 to 29 April 2013. Two Field Coordinators covered Grand Gedeh and Sinoe, while the other two covered Maryland, Grand Kru and River Gee. The Coordinators followed the 5 teams into the field, reviewed the completed questionnaires for any errors and discussed progress with the team leaders on a daily basis.

Upon completion of the field work, a total of 15 data entry clerks were sub-contracted by LISGIS to enter all the completed questionnaires into CSPro, a widely used software package for data entry, editing and tabulation. The data entry interface was designed during the data collection phase. Following a one-day training, data entry was carried out over a period of 7 days. Double data entry was done to minimize errors and ensure optimal quality. All questionnaires were stored in a secure location and treated with the required confidentiality.

Subsequently, a comprehensive set of tables was produced, using CSPro to tabulate the results of the 1,200 interviews. The PBO M&E Unit carried out in-depth data analysis, while also comparing the findings with other surveys such as the Rule of Law Indicators survey, Talking Peace survey, and other relevant studies in order to validate the key findings.

2.4   Limitations

The survey was designed and implemented in a sound methodological and systematic manner, so as to ensure the findings would accurately represent the perceptions of the people in the 5 counties. The sampling strategy was developed based on the male-female and urban-rural ratio according to the latest available population figures from the 2008 Population and Housing Census conducted by LISGIS. Enumeration Areas, households and subsequently respondents were selected randomly to avoid any potential bias. In some cases there were only a few household members at home in the randomly selected household to be covered by the survey, hence limiting to a minor extent - albeit by no means significantly - the potential respondents for the actual interviews. However, the random stratified cluster sampling method, using PPS as explained in section 2.1, ensured that the survey findings can be considered representative of the population at the county level.

One point to keep in mind is that this survey, like similar studies, relies on self-reporting by respondents. Therefore, certain factors may have influenced the quality of the data collected, for example possible misunderstanding of some questions, different interpretations, inaccurate recall of past events (e.g. for those questions asking about events during the last 12 months), or possible intentional misreporting (e.g. for sensitive questions where certain responses might have been considered as socially unacceptable). However, these type of risks were minimized by carefully designing the questionnaire to reduce any potential bias, making the various questions as clear as possible, mostly in Liberian English so that respondents with no or limited education could also understand them. Also, all interviews were conducted anonymously and in a private place without other household members or neighbours present. All interviewers were thoroughly trained in interview techniques and in fact all those who were randomly selected as respondents agreed to participate in the survey.

3. Survey Findings

This chapter presents an overview of the main findings of the survey, including four sections: 1) key characteristics of the survey respondents, providing the necessary context for the subsequent analysis; 2) perceptions on security, including access to, confidence in and performance of the police; 3) perceptions on justice, including settlement of disputes, confidence in and access to the formal and customary/traditional justice systems; and 4) awareness of the Regional Justice and Security Hubs.

3.1 Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1 presents the key characteristics of the respondents interviewed in the 5 counties.

Table 1: Key characteristics of respondents by county and total

	Grand Gedeh	Grand Kru	Maryland	River Gee	Sinoe	Total
Sample size (n)	308	142	334	164	252	1,200
Weighted n (%)	26%	12%	28%	14%	21%	100%
Sex (%)						
Male	52%	50%	52%	52%	53%	52%
Female	48%	50%	48%	48%	47%	48%
Age (years)						
18-30	37%	35%	35%	43%	32%	36%
31-40	28%	30%	29%	25%	31%	29%
41-50	16%	18%	19%	18%	21%	18%
51-60	10%	9%	11%	9%	10%	10%
60+	9%	9%	6%	6%	6%	7%
Religion (%)						
Christian	96%	90%	92%	94%	95%	94%
Muslim	2%	2%	3%	4%	3%	3%
Traditional/Other	1%	1%	3%	2%	0%	2%
None	0%	6%	2%	1%	1%	1%
Ethnic group (%)						
Grebo	4%	85%	83%	89%	8%	48%
Krahn	75%	0%	1%	2%	1%	20%
Kru	3%	13%	6%	4%	57%	16%
Sapo	3%	0%	0%	0%	19%	5%
Bassa	4%	1%	3%	0%	5%	3%
Gio	2%	1%	0%	1%	3%	1%
Mano	2%	0%	1%	0%	2%	1%
Kpelle	2%	0%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Fula	0%	0%	1%	2%	1%	1%
Loma	2%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Kissi	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Other	2%	1%	2%	0%	2%	2%

Cross-checking confirmed that overall the results for the key socio-economic indicators in the 5 counties are in line with the findings of the latest Population and Housing Census conducted in Liberia (2008), while of course taking into account that certain changes have occurred during the last 5 years.

A significant proportion (36%) of the respondents was below 31 years of age, while 29% was between 31 and 40 years old. A total of 18% was reportedly between 41 and 50 years of age and 17% aged 51 or above. A large majority of respondents identified themselves as Christian (94%), whereas 3% reported being Muslim, 2% practicing a traditional or other religion, and 1% not practicing any religion.

In terms of ethnicity, the survey found that the Grebo constitute the largest ethnic group overall in the 5 counties combined (48%), representing between 80 and 90% of the population in River Gee, Grand Kru and Maryland. However, there are significant differences across the various counties. In Grand Gedeh, for example, the Krahn (75%) form by far the largest ethnic group, whereas in Sinoe the Kru (57%) and Sapo (19%) are particularly frequent.

Table 2: Education level and main occupation by county and total

	Grand Gedeh	Grand Kru	Maryland	River Gee	Sinoe	Total
Sample size (n)	308	142	334	164	252	1,200
Weighted n (%)	26%	12%	28%	14%	21%	100%
Education level (%)						
No formal schooling	18%	37%	36%	29%	32%	30%
Elementary	29%	30%	23%	23%	26%	26%
Junior High	26%	20%	17%	23%	18%	21%
High School	21%	13%	19%	20%	19%	19%
Vocational/Technical School	2%	0%	2%	3%	4%	2%
College	3%	0%	1%	1%	2%	1%
University	1%	0%	2%	1%	0%	1%
Main occupation (%)						
Self-employed	65%	65%	53%	73%	67%	63%
Paid employee	10%	11%	13%	11%	21%	13%
Full-time student	14%	4%	6%	9%	4%	8%
Contributing family worker	3%	6%	11%	0%	2%	5%
Looking for work	4%	2%	5%	4%	1%	4%
Household worker	1%	7%	6%	2%	1%	3%
Not working, not looking for work	2%	4%	3%	1%	4%	3%
Retired/pensioner	1%	2%	1%	1%	0%	1%
Other	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%

Table 2 provides an overview of the education level and main occupation of the respondents. In terms of education, 30% of all respondents (with a high of 37% in Grand Kru) reported having no formal schooling at all, while an overall average of 26% only had elementary education. There are significant differences between the 5 counties.

For example, more people in Grand Gedeh indicated having received some kind of formal schooling as compared to respondents in the other counties. Overall, in all the counties women were almost twice as likely as men (39% versus 21% on average) to have never benefitted from formal education. This disparity is obviously cause for serious concern.

As for their main occupation, out of all respondents 63% reported to be self-employed, mainly involved in farming or running a small business. In addition, 13% were paid employees, such as teachers, nurses or plantation workers. A total of 8% identified themselves as full-time students. The various categories for main occupation as used in the questionnaire are equivalent to the 'activity status' categories from the Census.

3.2 Security

Public perceptions of security matters were assessed through a total of 24 specific questions covering issues including the perceived safety in communities, main security providers, access to the police as well as people's confidence in and perceived performance of the police. The key findings are highlighted in this section.

Safety and main security providers

When asked 'How safe do you feel in your community?' a majority (68%) of all respondents in the 5 counties indicated they felt safe, while on average 18% considered their communities to be very safe. Only 6% of respondents reported they did not feel safe and 1% felt not safe at all. Figure 2 shows the responses disaggregated by men and women, with minor differences noted. Generally, people in rural areas felt somewhat safer than in urban areas. Among the 5 counties no major differences were observed.

Figure 2: General sense of safety, disaggregated by male/female, total of 5 counties (%)
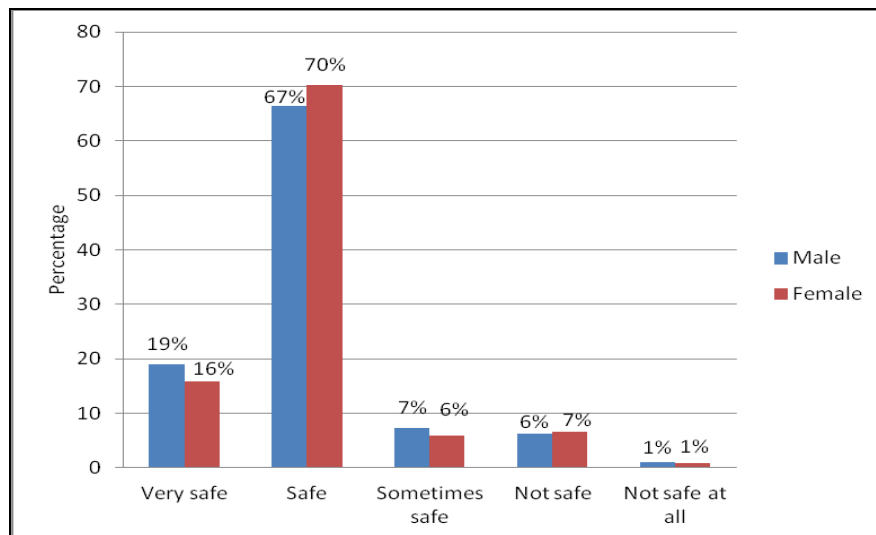
Overall, 19% of respondents indicated that the security situation had improved compared to the previous year, whereas 75% indicated it had remained the same and 5% said it had worsened. More men (23%) than women (15%) perceived an improvement in the situation, while people in urban areas were generally somewhat more positive. Interestingly, among the 5 counties a relatively high percentage of respondents in Grand Gedeh (35% in both urban and rural areas) felt that the security situation had improved.

When those who reported an improvement were asked for the main reason, 'more police presence' (32%) and 'less crime' (25%) was cited by many respondents. Some of the answers given were to a certain extent related to each other, making it difficult to draw clear conclusions. In urban areas, 49% of men and 34% of women reported the presence of more police as a key factor for the perceived improvement in the security situation. At the same time, 26% of people in rural areas mentioned the establishment of community watch teams as the main reason for enhanced security compared to the previous year. Compared to other counties, a relatively high percentage of respondents in Grand Gedeh (50%) reported the

presence of more police as a key factor for improved security. In fact, as part of Operation 'Restore Hope' initiated in June 2012, the Government increased the deployment of security forces along the border with Ivory Coast. This has been a joint operation including LNP/ERU, BIN/BPU and AFL, with Emergency Response Unit (ERU) officers being the main 'moving force' for the operation. Therefore, in certain border areas the police presence has indeed increased to some extent, and this may have been a factor in people reporting a perceived improvement in security as compared to April 2012.

Across the different counties most respondents (43%) who felt that the security situation had worsened over the last year, attributed this to increased crime levels, especially those in urban areas (61%) and women more so than men. Rural residents mostly mentioned 'less police presence' as the main factor (44%).

Table 3: Main security providers in communities, by county and total (%)

	Grand Gedeh	Grand Kru	Maryland	River Gee	Sinoe	Total
Police	54%	11%	26%	49%	33%	36%
Community watch team	26%	28%	17%	16%	50%	27%
Traditional authorities	9%	35%	8%	7%	2%	10%
UNMIL / UNPOL	14%	3%	18%	12%	0%	11%
BIN	1%	2%	6%	4%	1%	3%
AFL	0%	0%	1%	3%	0%	1%
CSOs	0%	1%	3%	0%	0%	1%
Myself / My family	11%	8%	7%	8%	4%	8%
God / Allah	21%	27%	18%	11%	13%	18%
Nobody	19%	26%	27%	18%	8%	20%
Other	1%	8%	3%	2%	5%	3%

Note: respondents could give multiple answers to this question so the total exceeds 100%.

Table 3 above provides an overview of responses to the question 'who provides security in your community?' Overall, 36% of respondents identified the police as the main provider of security in their community. Among urban residents this was more than twice as high as for people living in rural areas (59% and 26% respectively). In counties such as River Gee (49%) and Grand Gedeh (54%) a considerably higher proportion of respondents identified the police as the main security provider than for example in Grand Kru (11%).

However, many people across the 5 counties mentioned community watch teams (27%) and traditional authorities (10%) as primary security providers, especially in Sinoe and Grand Kru, where there are relatively many remote areas. When combined (37%), these 'local/traditional security mechanisms' were considered more or less equally important as the police. Overall, 11% identified UNMIL or UNPOL among the main security providers, more so in Maryland (18%) and Grand Gedeh (14%), where UNMIL/UNPOL has in fact a larger presence of personnel.

Of concern is that 1 out of 5 respondents felt that nobody provides any security in their community, whereas 8% relied on themselves or their family, and 18% referred to God/Allah looking after them. In Maryland and Grand Kru up to 1 in 4 respondents indicated that nobody provides security. However, to put this in perspective, a significant majority of people in all counties do feel safe or very safe in their community, according to one of the findings noted above.

Access to the police

During the last 3 months, 20% of overall respondents had seen the police in their community several times a week and 21% on average once a week. On the other hand, 32% had rarely encountered police officers in their community, and 27% had never seen any police, as shown in Figure 3 above. In line with the findings from other questions (above) there was a significant disparity between urban and rural areas. For example, 40% of urban residents reported having seen the police several times a week over the last 3 months. On the contrary, in counties such as Grand Kru and Maryland a large majority of respondents indicated that they rarely or never saw police officers in their community.

Figure 3: Frequency of police presence in communities during the last 3 months by county and total (%)
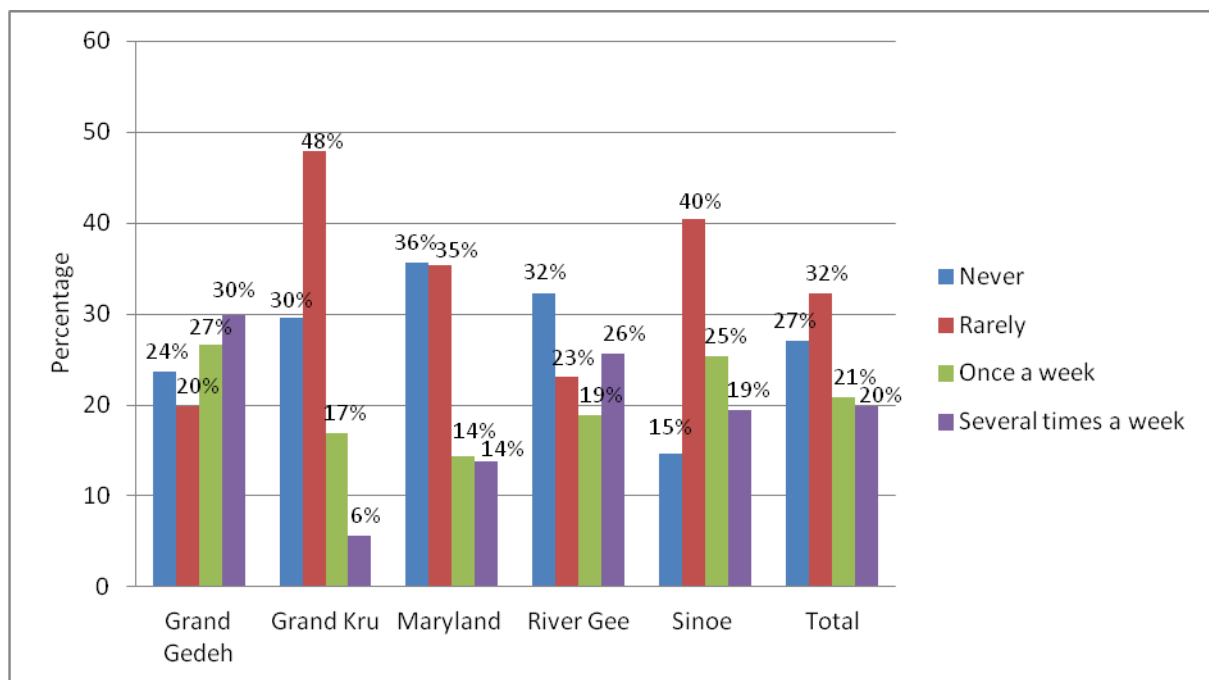
When people were asked whether they knew how to contact the police, 58% responded positively, with the highest positive response rate in Grand Gedeh (72%). Overall, more men (61%) than women (54%) said they knew how to get in touch with the police. As expected, it was higher in urban (70%) than in rural areas (52%). However, in response to a follow-up question only 36% of those who replied positively to the previous question, confirmed they actually knew the telephone number of a police officer in their community or another community. More than double the proportion of urban residents said they knew as compared to rural residents.

A very high percentage of respondents (87% of men and 80% of women) reported that they knew where the nearest police station was. There were however some differences between the 5 counties as it was highest in Grand Gedeh (95%) and relatively lowest in River Gee (75%). More people in urban areas (95%) than in rural areas (79%) responded positively.

**Figure 4: Time it takes to reach the nearest police station, by county and total (%)**
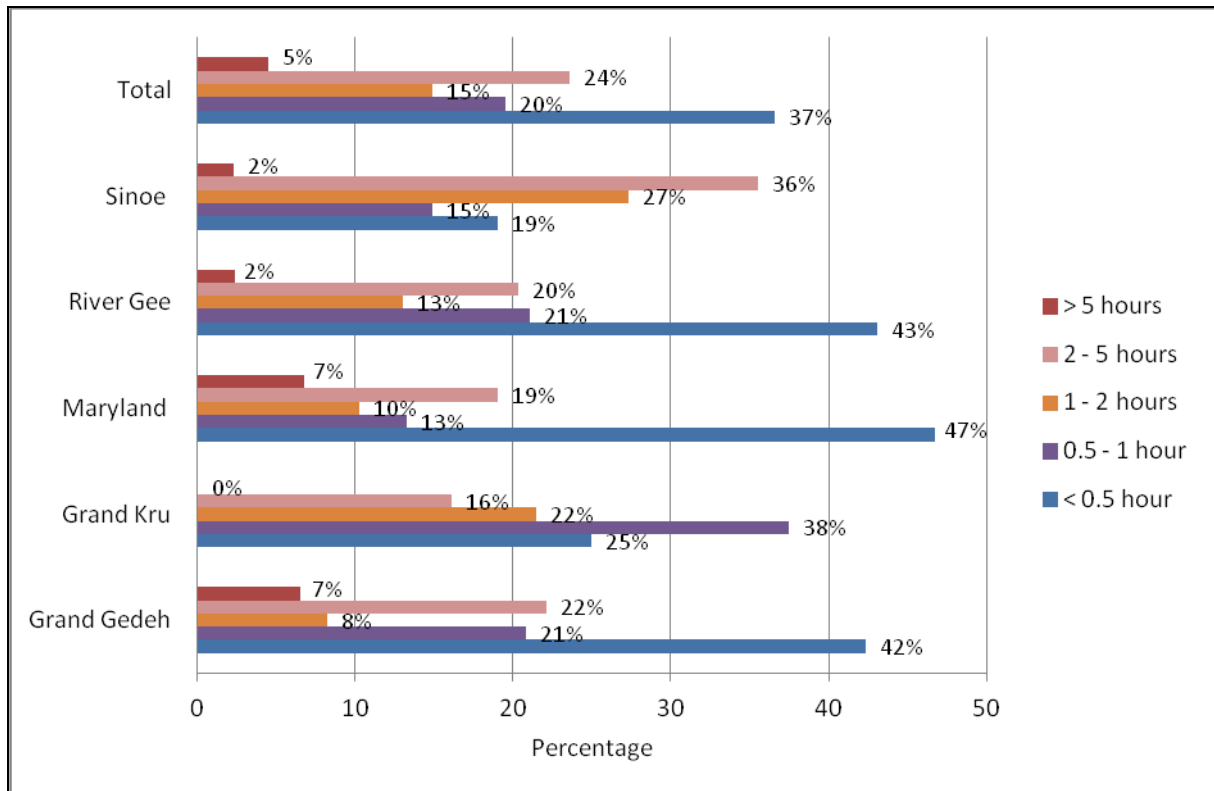
Overall, as Figure 4 shows, 37% of people who said they knew where the nearest police station was, reported that it would take them less than 30 minutes to reach it, while 20% said between 30 and 60 minutes. A total of 15% of respondents estimated it would take between 1 and 2 hours, whereas 24% said between 2 and 5 hours. An average of 5% indicated more than 5 hours. Not surprisingly, there was a huge urban-rural divide in the sense that almost all urban residents would take less than an hour to reach a police station, as compared to only 33% of rural residents. This becomes very clear when comparing the different counties in Figure 4. Especially in a vast county like Sinoe, with many remote areas, people tend to spend a significant amount of time to get to the nearest police station. The survey results showed some small differences between men and women, more so in rural areas, in terms of estimated time. This suggests a certain lack of knowledge of the actual time it takes to reach the nearest police station

As for the mode of transportation, the majority (67%) of all respondents would walk to the police station, 30% would use a motorbike taxi ('*pem pem*') and 3% a car. These percentages were almost the same in urban and rural areas, taking into account of course that the distances vary significantly. In Grand Kru relatively more people said they would use a *pem pem*, probably because of the bad condition of most roads and the long distances between villages and towns.

Public confidence in the police

Figure 5: Trust in the police by male/female, total of 5 counties (%)
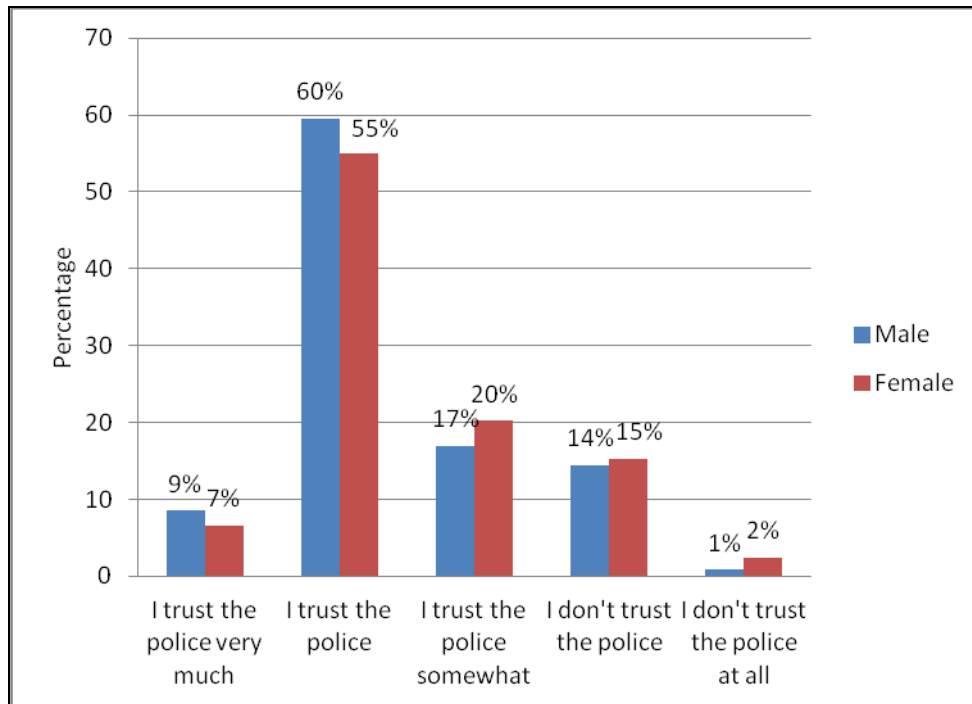
As depicted in Figure 5, a majority of respondents (60% of men and 55% of women) in the 5 counties said they trusted the police in their area, while 9% and 7% respectively acknowledged a high level of trust in the police. However, the rest of the interviewees (35% of the total) displayed little or no trust in the police. Not much difference was observed between urban and rural areas, but in general women were somewhat more sceptical across the various counties.

Figure 6: Perception of equal treatment by the police, disaggregated by male/female, total of 5 counties (%)
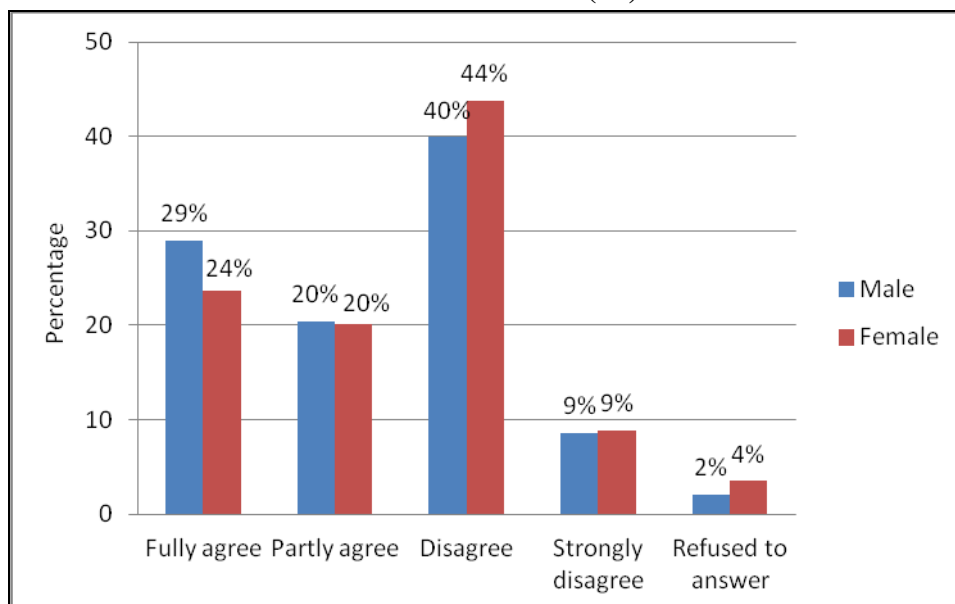
To get a broader idea of current perceptions, people were asked whether in their opinion the police treat everyone the same, regardless of one's gender, tribe, religion, economic or social status. Figure 6 shows the findings for the 5 counties. Whereas in general 29% of men and 24% of women fully agreed that this was the case, 20% only partly agreed. A significant number of respondents (42%) disagreed with this statement and some (9%) even strongly disagreed, hence 51% combined. As was the case with the previous question regarding trust in the police, women were generally found to be more sceptical. Across the 5 counties, people in Maryland and River Gee were somewhat more positive (about 44% disagreed or strongly disagreed), while residents of Grand Gedeh (59%) and Grand Kru (57%) were more critical than the average. Still, the overall results suggest a substantial lack of confidence in the police when it concerns equal treatment of people.

Performance of the police

According to the survey findings, 15% of people interviewed in the 5 counties had been the victim of a crime within the last 12 months, and 81% reported this to someone outside their family. Of those, 54% went to the police, 37% reported it to the local chief or elders, and 9% to someone else. Overall, the percentage of crime victims was higher in urban areas (21%) than in rural areas (11%). Among the counties it turned out to be relatively lowest (9%) in River Gee and highest (18%) in Grand Gedeh.

Figure 7: Satisfaction with the response to a crime reported within the last 12 months to the police and the chief/elders, total of 5 counties (%)
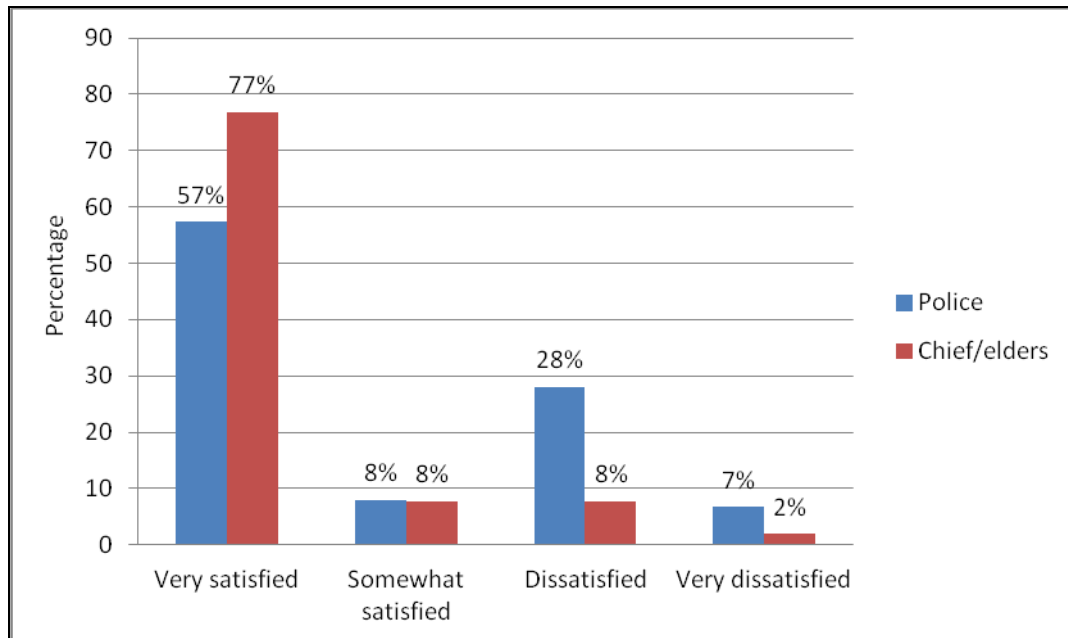
The people who had reported their victimization of a crime within the last 12 months were subsequently asked how satisfied they were with the response (Figure 7). Overall, respondents expressed a relatively higher level of satisfaction about the response by the chief or elders (77%) compared to the police (57%). A total of 28% indicated that they were dissatisfied and 7% very dissatisfied with the response by the police. The level of

dissatisfaction was generally higher among women and urban residents. Regarding the response to a crime reported to a chief or elder, which predominantly occurred in rural settings, both men and women (about 3 in 4) were overall very satisfied.

One point to bear in mind is that in general the type of crimes reported to a chief or elders might be somewhat less serious, hence more likely to be resolved, than those crimes reported to the police. However, it is not uncommon that in certain instances chiefs refer specific cases to the police, whereas the police sometimes refer cases, especially petty ones, back to chiefs. Therefore, where cases are referred up and down the chain of potential 'security providers', it makes interpretation of the findings about satisfaction with the response more complex.

Another factor to take into consideration is that in rural areas each community has a chief or group of elders to handle disputes, while the police in both urban and rural areas are faced with fairly limited capacity (personnel, infrastructure, etc.) to deal with crime cases. Further analysis in terms of dispute settlement can be found in Section 3.3 on Justice.

Out of all the respondents 13% confirmed that they had paid something ('small thing' in Liberian English) to the police during the last 12 months. This almost equally applied to both men and women. It was generally higher in urban (17%) than in rural areas (11%). Paying something to the police was somewhat more frequent in Sinoe (17%) and Maryland (16%).

Figure 8: Reasons for paying something to the police during the last 12 months, total of 5 counties (%)
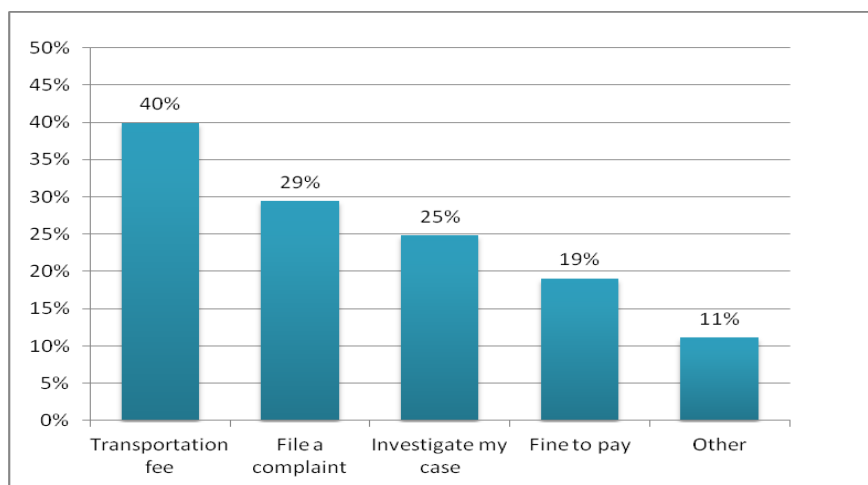
Note: respondents could give multiple answers to this question so the total exceeds 100%.

As for the reason why something was paid to the police, respondents could give multiple answers (Figure 8). Most cited a 'transportation fee' (40%), paying something to file a complaint (29%) or for the police to investigate their case (25%). Overall, 19% mentioned a fine they had to pay, while 11% referred to other reasons. Paying the police a transportation fee (usually fuel for a vehicle or motorbike) was especially common in rural areas, and particularly high in rural parts of Grand Gedeh as well as in Sinoe and Maryland.

Almost half of all interviewed respondents agreed to some extent that it is possible to avoid arrest by offering 'small thing' to a police officer: 23% fully agreed and 25% partly agreed.

Generally, women and people in rural areas were more sceptical in terms of the possibility to bribe the police to avoid arrest. When comparing the 5 counties, respondents in Sinoe and Grand Kru were found to be more negative than the average in terms of fully or partly agreeing with this statement. It is worth mentioning that this question was asked to all interviewees, regardless of whether they had actually experienced such a situation themselves. It should also be noted that this was one of the very few questions which some respondents (3%) refused to answer. For most of the survey questions this was negligible and generally almost all interviewees were very willing to share information and respond to all of the questions asked.

All in all, 13% of respondents reported that they were actually asked to pay something to a police officer during the last 12 months. This question is slightly different than one of the previous questions since in this case it refers to police officers actively soliciting a bribe, whereas the other question included - for example - the payment of a fine which in principle can be considered a legitimate reason, at least in most cases. A higher percentage of urban residents (17%), especially men, had been specifically asked to pay something to a police officer, compared to 11% of rural residents. People in Maryland (17%) and Sinoe (16%) were more likely to have faced such an experience. These results largely correspond to the findings for various related questions presented previously in this section.

As part of the survey, interviewees were also asked how often they had seen police officers abusing people, either verbally or physically *('cussing or beating'* in Liberian English). Only 6% indicated they had seen this happen often, while 3% said very often. In urban areas this was somewhat higher than in rural areas. There were only minor differences between male and female respondents. For the 5 counties combined, 75% mentioned they had never witnessed abusive behaviour by the police and 15% had rarely seen this. However, despite this relatively positive finding in general, it was noted that in Sinoe a somewhat higher percentage of respondents reported they had often (9%) or very often (7%) seen police officers verbally or physically abuse people.

In response to the question 'where do you go to complain if the police bother you', 44% of respondents said they would go to the police station. This option was mentioned by 57% of people in urban areas, and among the counties especially by respondents in Grand Gedeh. Furthermore, 15% said they would complain to the district government and 9% to the respective county government. A further 9% would bring the complaint to a traditional leader or community chairman, and 12% said they had nowhere to go. Women in rural areas were most pessimistic with an average of 19% across the 5 counties indicating that in their view they really had nowhere to go if the police would harass them.

3.3 Justice

Public perceptions of a range of issues related to justice were assessed through a set of 29 questions. Specific topics included the settlement of disputes, confidence in and access to the formal and customary/traditional justice systems. People were also asked whether they knew where the nearest court is, the time taken to get there as well as perceived costs of taking a case to court. In addition, questions were asked about whether any information about the justice system and/or alternative dispute resolution mechanisms was being provided to communities and if so by whom.

Dispute resolution

A total of 21% of all respondents indicated that they or their household had been involved in a dispute ('*palava*' in Liberian English) during the last 12 months. This pertained to 20% of men and 22% of women. In urban areas almost twice as many people (30%) reported having been involved in a dispute than in rural areas (16%). Among the 5 counties, the percentage was highest in Grand Kru (28%) and lowest in River Gee (8%) as compared to the average.

Table 4: Type of disputes respondents or their households were involved in during the last 12 months by category, total of 5 counties (%)

Type of dispute	Percentage of respondents reporting the dispute
Divorce / spousal dispute / loving problem	24%
Domestic violence	22%
Conflict about land	13%
Debt / repayment of loans / money issues	13%
Theft	12%
Child abandonment/neglect	11%
Conflict over noise, disturbances	8%
Inheritance dispute	6%
Rape	4%
Other criminal acts (e.g. assault, kidnapping, murder)	3%
Conflict over religious belief	2%
Conflict related to construction (urban areas)	2%
Employer/Employment related	1%
Breach of Contract	1%
Other dispute	9%

Note: respondents could give multiple answers to this question so the total exceeds 100%.

As can be seen in Table 4, the most common disputes reported were divorce or marriage disputes (24%), domestic violence (22%), disputes about money and debt (13%), land disputes (13%), theft (12%) and child neglect (11%). Respondents could give multiple answers to this question. Certain types of disputes were mentioned more frequently by men or women. For example, land disputes were mentioned more often by men (15%) than

women (11%), as well as inheritance disputes (8% and 3% respectively). In Grand Gedeh, Maryland and Sinoe more urban than rural residents had been involved in a dispute over land during the last year. Overall, disputes over land were mentioned more frequently in urban areas (17%) than in rural areas (9%), probably due to more and more people coming to towns and cities resulting in a certain degree of overcrowding and competing claims to land.

In general, women more frequently than men reported marital disputes (or *'loving problems'* in Liberian English), domestic violence, rape, child neglect and disputes over noise. It is worth noting that almost equal percentages of men and women, both in urban and rural settings, referred to domestic violence as one of the main sources of conflict. However, women explicitly mentioned rape about twice as many times than men (5% vis-à-vis 2%) across the 5 counties, but some differences could be observed between the counties.

Most respondents (28%) said they first went to the police to settle their major dispute. For urban residents this was 36% and for people in rural areas 21%. Overall, women were found to be more likely to go to the police than men. All in all, 17% reported going to the mayor/town chief for their major dispute, with twice as many people in rural areas doing so as compared to urban residents which is not surprising. Another 17% overall mentioned they went to elders or the community chairman. Men were more inclined to revert to traditional leaders than women.

Further analysis showed that 43% of those who went to the police in an effort to settle their major dispute during the last 12 months did so because they perceived it to be faster than other possible institutions/persons. People who went to elders or the community chairman mainly mentioned as the main reason that in their opinion it would be fairer. Those reverting to the mayor/town chief cited 'faster' and 'fairer' (both 24%) as the main reasons. Respondents who went to the Land Commissioner to settle a dispute predominantly did so because in their view it was cheaper (43%) whereas others thought it was fairer (29%). Overall, proximity (closeness) was cited as a less important reason for the various dispute resolution mechanisms.

When asked whether people had to pay anything to resolve their dispute (among those who reported one to a particular institution or person), a relatively high proportion of respondents (46% overall) confirmed this. Those who took their case to the District government (100%) Circuit Court (100%) and Magistrate Court (64%) were most likely to have had to pay something, followed by those who went to the mayor/town chief (62%), paramount chief (60%) and the police (56%).

As a follow-up question people were asked whether the dispute was subsequently resolved and whether they were happy with the result. A large majority (88%) responded positively to the first question, and 83% of those whose disputes were resolved said they were satisfied, especially the people who went to traditional leaders or elders (90%). However, the overall level of satisfaction was somewhat lower among those who reverted to the Magistrate Court (71%) or the police (77%).

Table 5 provides an overview of the various responses by county regarding the best place (in people's opinion) to solve 7 different types of disputes. This question was asked to all interviewees, regardless of whether or not one had actually experienced such a dispute. Only very minor differences were observed among male and female respondents, or between urban and rural areas.

Table 5: Best place to solve different types of disputes by category, disaggregated by county and total (%)

		Grand Gedeh	Grand Kru	Maryland	River Gee	Sinoe	Total
Family business	Court	1%	1%	2%	3%	0%	1%
	Town Chief	14%	11%	14%	17%	14%	14%
	Within the family	82%	83%	79%	79%	81%	81%
	District Commissioner	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
	Police	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Other	3%	4%	4%	1%	5%	3%
Money business	Court	28%	35%	22%	45%	24%	29%
	Town Chief	45%	30%	40%	30%	56%	42%
	Within the family	7%	27%	23%	15%	4%	14%
	District Commissioner	0%	0%	0%	3%	2%	1%
	Police	14%	4%	8%	4%	6%	8%
	Other	5%	2%	6%	2%	9%	5%
Stealing business	Court	20%	46%	27%	45%	26%	30%
	Town Chief	36%	23%	34%	27%	38%	33%
	Within the family	0%	14%	5%	2%	1%	4%
	Within the community	1%	4%	5%	4%	4%	3%
	Mob Justice	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%
	District Commissioner	0%	0%	1%	2%	0%	1%
	Police	40%	11%	21%	14%	22%	24%
	Other	2%	1%	5%	4%	7%	4%
Hurting palava (injury, fighting)	Court	15%	58%	34%	41%	36%	34%
	Town Chief	37%	15%	27%	26%	29%	28%
	Within the family	1%	8%	2%	15%	1%	4%
	Within the community	10%	4%	4%	4%	3%	5%
	District Commissioner	0%	0%	3%	2%	2%	2%
	Police	35%	13%	22%	8%	21%	22%
	Other	1%	1%	7%	5%	8%	5%
Land palava	Court	23%	51%	33%	48%	43%	37%
	Town Chief	20%	20%	19%	16%	18%	19%
	Within the family	0%	7%	1%	0%	2%	1%
	Within the community	1%	5%	8%	1%	4%	4%
	Land Commission	52%	8%	24%	30%	25%	30%
	District Commissioner	1%	4%	8%	3%	3%	4%
	Mob Justice	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%
	Police	2%	1%	3%	1%	0%	2%
	Other	1%	3%	5%	0%	4%	3%

		Grand Gedeh	Grand Kru	Maryland	River Gee	Sinoe	Total
Rape	Court	58%	81%	67%	69%	73%	68%
	Town Chief	13%	6%	11%	10%	9%	11%
	Within the family	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%
	Within the community	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%
	Mob Justice	0%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%
	District Commissioner	0%	0%	4%	4%	3%	2%
	Police	27%	11%	8%	12%	11%	14%
	Other	1%	1%	4%	4%	3%	3%
Murder	Court	56%	77%	63%	72%	68%	65%
	Town Chief	9%	6%	10%	7%	5%	8%
	Within the family	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%
	Within the community	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	0%
	Mob Justice	0%	1%	2%	2%	3%	2%
	District Commissioner	1%	0%	7%	8%	5%	4%
	Police	33%	11%	13%	9%	14%	18%
	Other	1%	1%	3%	1%	5%	3%

Regarding 'family issues', an overwhelming majority preferred to deal with this within the family (81%), although some (14%) also referred to the town chief. Disputes over money or stealing would best be settled by the town chief according to most respondents (42% and 33% respectively). However, in counties like Grand Kru and River Gee relatively more people were of the view that stealing should be dealt with by the court.

For '*hurting palavas*' (Liberian English for disputes involving injuries or fighting) most respondents agreed that these would best be handled by a court (34%), town chief (28%) or the police (22%), with some variety by county. Land disputes should preferably be taken to a court (37%) or the Land Commission (30%) according to respondents. Over half (52%) of people in Grand Gedeh expressed a preference for the Land Commission, whereas residents from the other 4 counties thought such disputes would best be dealt with in court. Regarding rape and murder cases, there was broad agreement that these were to be taken to court (68% and 65% respectively) or else to the police (14% and 18% respectively). Overall, very few people indicated that reverting to 'mob justice' (taking the law in their own hands) would be the best way to deal with any dispute. However, in murder cases an average of 2% of respondents mentioned mob justice.

It is worth noting that taking a matter to the police will generally not result in a final solution as such, since the police do not have the authority to act as a dispute resolution mechanism in terms of passing binding judgements, in contrast to a court or town chief. Therefore, for those types of dispute where people referred to the police, multiple interpretations are possible. Overall, this may suggest a preference to deal with such disputes through an 'official' rather than 'customary' way, and one may expect that at least part of the cases brought to the police, if indeed serious, would end up being taken to court. Another point to take into consideration, as noted previously, is that sometimes cases that are initially taken to the local chief may subsequently be referred to the police by the chief, or vice versa i.e. the police referring cases back to the local chief.

Access to courts

When asked whether they knew where the nearest court was, most respondents (92% of men and 85% of women) said they did. While generally men and urban residents expressed a somewhat greater knowledge in terms of the location of the nearest court, the overall positive response was very high across all areas and all 5 counties.

Figure 9: Time it takes to reach the nearest court, by county and total (%)
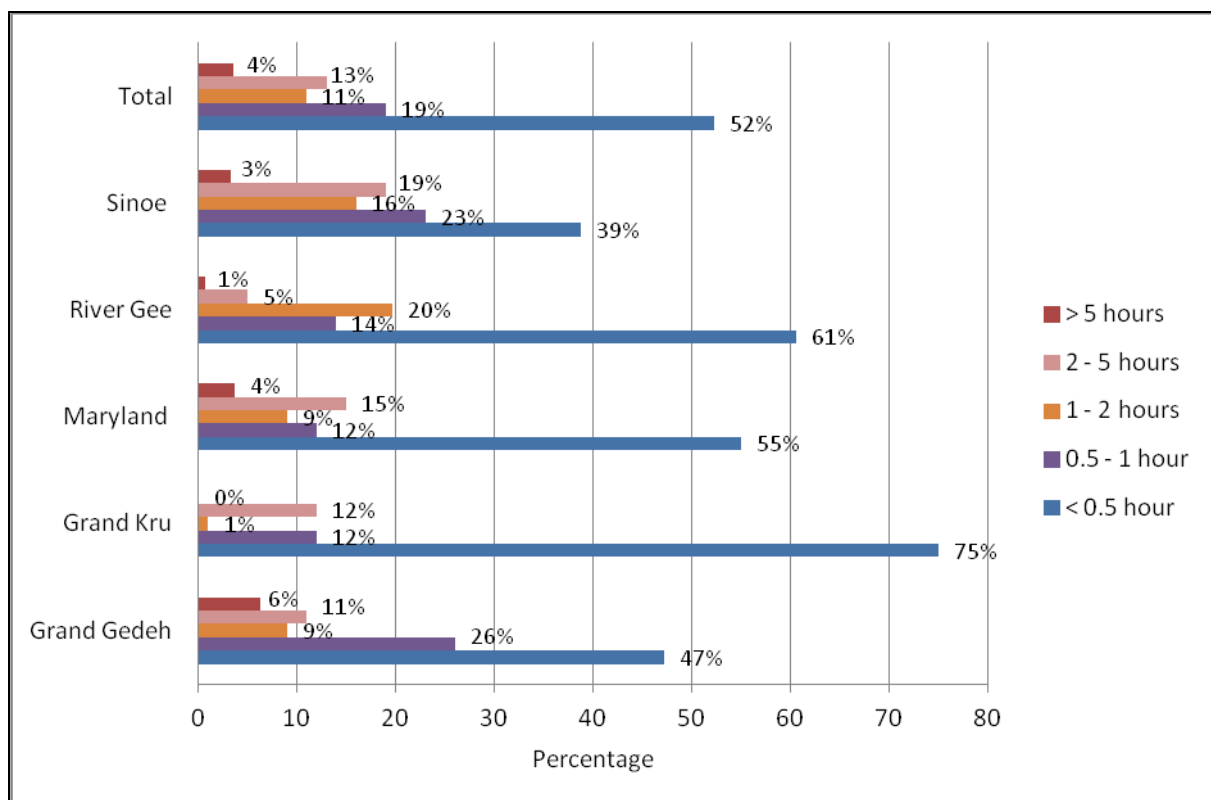

Figure 9 shows that 52% of those who confirmed they knew where the nearest court was reported that it would take them less than 30 minutes to reach it, while 19% said between 30 and 60 minutes. Another 11% of respondents estimated it would take between 1 and 2 hours, while 13% said between 2 to 5 hours, and 4% would have to travel more than 5 hours. As expected, almost all urban residents (95%) would take less than an hour to reach a court, as opposed to 57% of people living in rural areas. Most courts are in the county capitals. Looking at the various counties in Figure 9, one can see that especially in Sinoe, with a large surface and many remote areas, on average 35% of people would take 1 up to 5 hours to reach the nearest court. As was the case with the question regarding the nearest police station, there were small differences between men and women, more so in rural areas, in terms of the estimated time, which implies a certain lack of knowledge of the actual time it takes to get to the nearest court.

The large majority (77%) of all respondents who knew the nearest court would walk there, whereas 21% would use a motorbike taxi (*'pem pem'*) and 2% a car. More rural (81%) than urban residents (69%) said they would walk, and particularly women in towns and cities indicated they preferred taking a *pem pem*.

In order to get an overview of the perceived access to courts vis-à-vis town chiefs, all interviewees were asked how easy or difficult it was to take a case to the court or to the town chief, regardless whether they had ever done so in practice. Figure 10 illustrates the responses for the 2 options. As can be seen, most people across the 5 counties thought it was much easier to access the town chief as compared to taking a case to court. A large majority of 90% of respondents indicated that it was easy (53%) or very easy (37%) to bring a case to the town chief. Both men and women rated this equally positive. In contrast, only 50% across urban and rural areas thought it was easy or very easy to access the court. However, in general women (43%) were considerably more sceptical than men (57%). Overall, people in Grand Gedeh and Maryland were somewhat more negative about the access to courts vis-à-vis the average. Since all the responses provided are perceptions, it is difficult to draw clear conclusions from these findings since they may not necessarily be based on knowledge of the actual procedures, nor based on people's own experiences in practice.

Figure 10: Access to court and town chief, total of 5 counties (%)
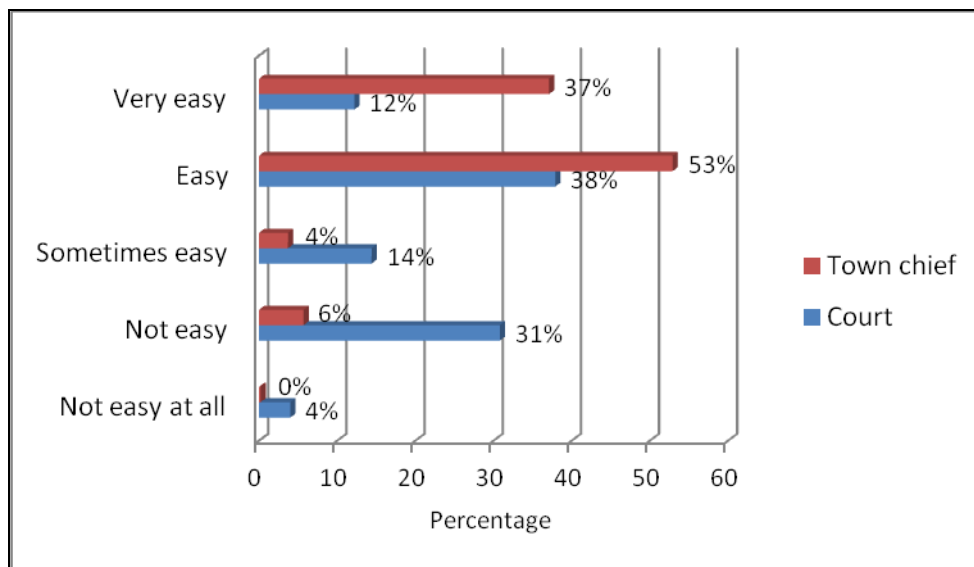
Asked whether people thought the chief - in general - is fair towards both the complainant and the accused when dealing with a dispute, most respondents agreed (57%) or strongly agreed (23%). There was hardly any noticeable difference in the response among men and women, or between urban and rural areas.

Public confidence in courts

A number of questions further explored people's views about their confidence in and access to the court system. Overall, 34% agreed and 15% strongly agreed with the statement that the courts treat everyone the same, regardless of one's gender, tribe, religion, economic or social status. At the same time, 16% somewhat agreed, 29% did not agree and 6% did not agree at all. Figure 11 below shows the different opinions of men and women. Similar to a previous question pertaining to the police, women were generally found to be more sceptical about equal treatment by the courts. Whereas people in Maryland and River Gee were somewhat more positive than the average, respondents in Grand Kru were found to be more critical than in the other counties, with 60% not or not at all agreeing that courts treat everyone the same.

Figure 11: Perception of equal treatment by the courts, disaggregated by male/female, total of 5 counties (%)
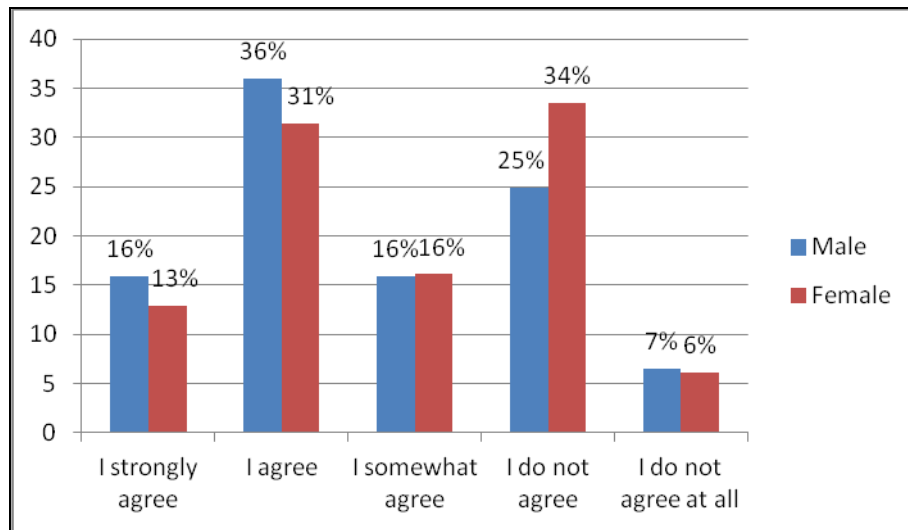
Looking at all the 5 counties together, 47% of respondents indicated they trusted the court system and 10% said they trust it very much. On the other hand, 14% did not trust the courts and 2% not at all, whereas 28% trusted the courts to some extent. Although there was very little difference between urban and rural areas, across the board women were significantly more sceptical in their perception of the courts, especially women in urban areas. Some variation in responses was observed among the counties, but no major differences. Comparing this for example to the expressed levels of trust in the police (Figure 5), relatively less people reported trusting the court system.

Interestingly, in relation to a specific type of case, a very high proportion of respondents were of the opinion that women who have been victims of rape, sexual violence or other gender-based violence (SGBV) are able to receive a fair hearing in court. In general, 46% agreed to this statement and 35% strongly agreed. Responses were almost identical among men and women, while in urban areas the overall view was even more positive. Whether or not this positive perception is also reflected in reality remains to be seen, and it would be interesting to take a closer look at the outcome of these types of cases in court. At least it appears to be an encouraging sign that a large majority, including women themselves, think that SGBV victims are able to receive a fair hearing in court.
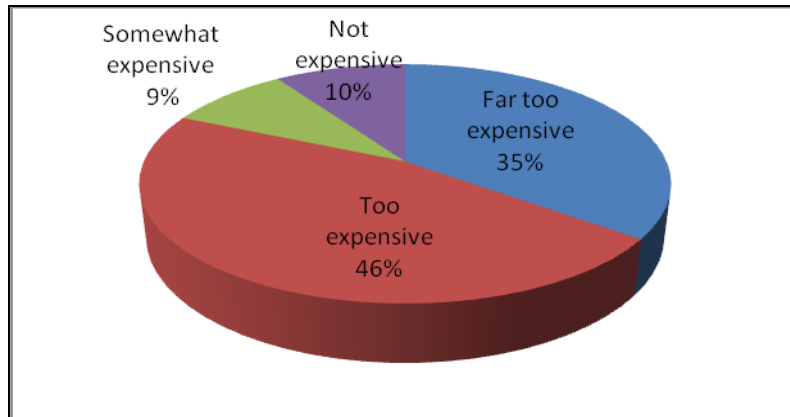
In response to the question 'When people take others to court, what do you think they want the court to do?' the vast majority (77%) said to 'solve a dispute'. A total of 9% of all respondents indicated they would want the court to throw the other person in jail. This was somewhat higher in urban (13%) than in rural areas (7%). Other responses included 'to give the other person punishment other than jail' (5%) and 'make the other person pay compensation for stolen or destroyed goods' (4%).

Costs of the court system

One of the factors regarding accessibility to court is the actual or perceived cost. An overwhelming majority of respondents (81%) indicated that in their opinion going to court was too expensive (46%) or far too expensive (35%) as presented in Figure 12. Not less than 84% of rural residents versus 77% of urban residents agreed that it was expensive or far too

expensive. In all cases women were even slightly (2%) more negative than men about the perceived costs. Compared to the other counties, people in Grand Gedeh and Sinoe (both 88%) were most convinced that going to court was unaffordable.

Figure 12: Perception of the costs of going to court, total of 5 counties (%)

In response to the question how often crime victims have to pay somebody to file a complaint in court, 30% said sometimes, whereas 23% said often and 12% very often. Again, this was a question asked to all interviewees. People in rural areas and women were generally more sceptical. While 46% of respondents, more men than women, in urban areas thought that crime victims would rarely or never have to pay somebody for filing a complaint, only 30% of people in rural areas were of that view. Whether the latter were more realistic is of course difficult to verify since there is not much, if any, evidence of how often such payments are being made in practice.

Figure 13: Perception of the frequency of people avoiding jail or receiving less punishment by paying somebody at the court, disaggregated by urban/rural, total of 5 counties (%)
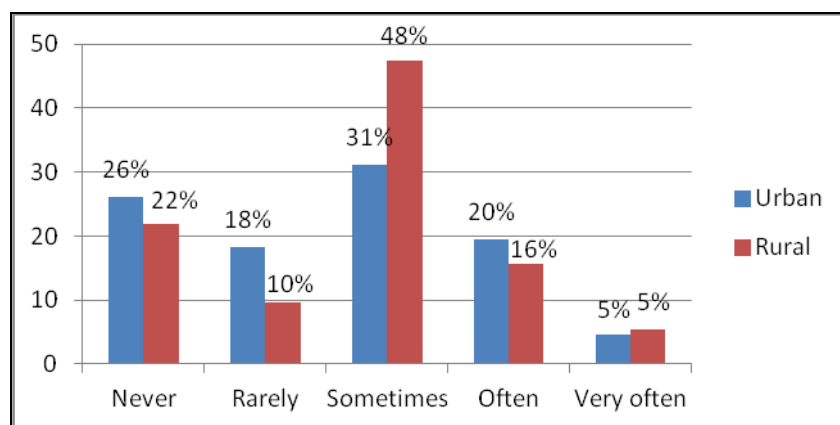

As becomes clear from Figure 13, less straightforward responses were given regarding the question 'how often it happens that people can avoid going to jail or get less punishment by paying somebody at the court'. Since the differences are quite significant, these findings are disaggregated by urban-rural in the chart below. A relatively large number of people, almost

half (48%) of those living in rural areas, thought that this would happen sometimes, with 31% of urban residents being of the same view. According to 20% of urban and 16% of rural residents it happens often, or very often (5% in both cases) that by paying a bribe people can avoid or receive a lesser sentence. However, as with most questions, women were overall considerably more sceptical than men. Among the 5 counties, people in Sinoe (35% as compared to 22% on average) were most negative in their perception of possible corrupt practices at the courts.

Overall, 19% of respondents reported that sometimes organisations are coming to their community to teach about the justice system or how to better solve disputes. In rural areas this was happening according to 18% of interviewees vis-à-vis 19% in urban areas. Women in rural areas (21%) had experienced this more often than men (17%). In most instances by far (66%) these were civil society organisations (CSOs), more so in urban (74%) than in rural areas (63%). Urban residents (11%), in particular women, more frequently mentioned visits by religious organisations than people in rural areas (only 5%). However, 13% of rural residents, especially men, reported government representatives coming to their community to provide information about the justice system or how best to settle disputes. The variance in responses by men and women might possibly be explained by the extent to which they are invited by specific organisations (CSOs, government officials, etc.) or other factors such as whether they are at home or for example working their land (in rural areas) at the time when organisations come to their community.

As can be seen in Figure 14, there were significant differences between the counties. While in Grand Gedeh almost all such visits were reported to be by CSOs, in counties like Sinoe and Maryland several people also mentioned government and religious organisations coming to their community. It is worth noting that upon further analysis of the 'Other' responses, it turned out that many were in fact CSOs whereas the Justice and Peace Commission and UNMIL were sometimes also referred to.

Figure 14: Type of organisations coming to communities to teach about the justice system or how to better solve disputes, by county (%)
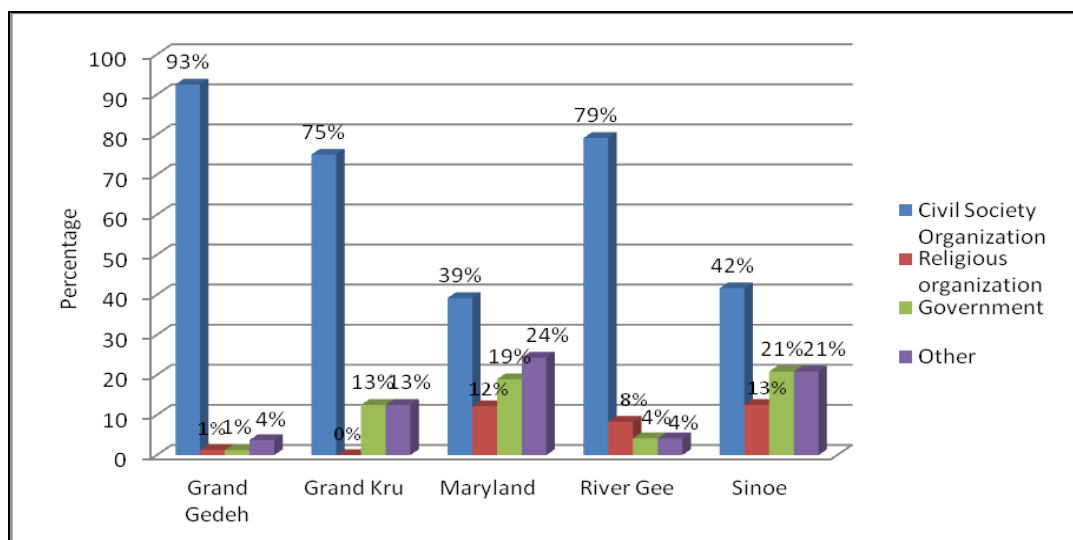
3.4 Regional Justice and Security Hubs

As part of this baseline survey, people were also asked whether they had heard about the Regional Justice and Security Hubs. As becomes clear from Figure 15, only a limited number (7% in total) confirmed they heard about the Hubs. Since very little information on the Hubs has so far been shared in the various counties, and targeted outreach and communication activities are only expected to start later in 2013, this relatively low level of knowledge is not surprising. In general, more men (9%) than women (5%) responded positively to the question. Furthermore, almost twice as many people in urban areas (10%) than in rural areas (6%) had heard about the Hubs. People in Maryland (14%) and Grand Kru (12%) were somewhat more familiar with the Hub concept than those in other counties. Interestingly, it was lowest in Grand Gedeh (2%) where in fact one of the 2 Regional Hubs will be located.

**Figure 15: Knowledge about the Regional Justice and Security Hubs,
by county and total (%)**
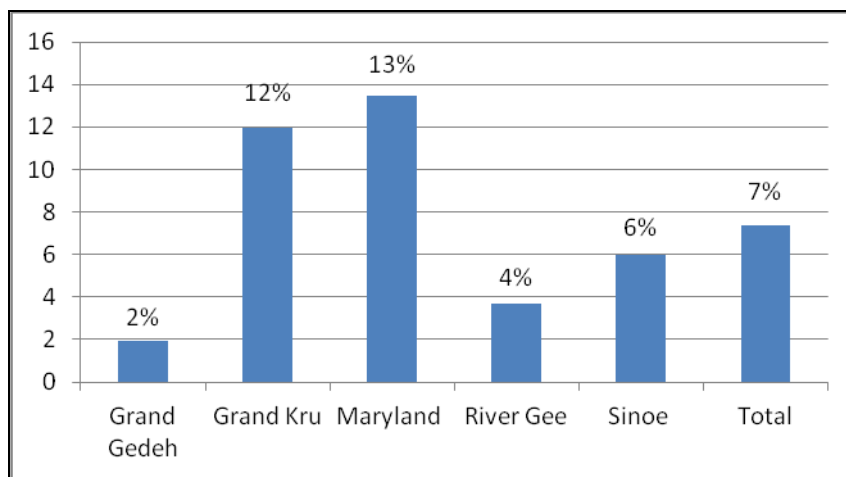
Not many people were able to mention the location of the Regional Justice and Security Hubs. Out of those who said they heard about the Hubs, only 15% knew both of the 2 locations, i.e. Zwedru and Harper. A mere 36% managed to provide 1 correct answer, especially people in Harper (Maryland), whereas the other 46% were unable to name any of the locations, which begs the question whether they really know what the Hub concept means. One of the possible reasons may be that some had heard or read about the Gbarnga Hub, which was officially opened by the President of Liberia in February 2013, but did not necessarily know that a similar concept would also be applied in Zwedru and Harper.

4. Conclusion

This public perception survey was conducted in the 5 counties of Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, River Gee, Grand Kru and Maryland to assess people's views on various justice and security issues in Liberia. While providing a baseline for the counties to be covered by the Zwedru and Harper Regional Justice and Security Hubs prior to the roll-out specific services, the survey covered a number of different aspects, not only limited to the Hubs. A total of 1,200 interviews were conducted from 20 to 29 April 2013. A random multi-stage stratified cluster sampling method was applied to ensure the findings are representative of the population at the county level. The survey was designed and coordinated by the Peacebuilding Office at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and implemented with technical assistance from LISGIS.

Security

In the 5 counties, a majority of interviewees indicated they felt safe (68%) or very safe (18%) in their communities. Overall, 19% of respondents indicated that in their view the security situation had improved compared to the previous year, whereas 75% felt it had remained the same and 5% said it had worsened. Women and people in rural areas were generally somewhat more sceptical. On average, 36% of all respondents mentioned the police as the main security provider in their community. Among urban residents this was more than twice as high as for people in rural areas. However, many people across the 5 counties mentioned community watch teams (27%) and traditional authorities (10%) as primary security providers. At the same time, 20% of respondents felt that nobody provided any security.

The police presence in communities varied significantly by county, with 32% of respondents indicating they rarely saw the police, while 27% had never seen a police officer in their community during the last 3 months. A majority of people (84%) said they knew where the nearest police station was and how to contact the police. However, a significant urban-rural divide could be noted since almost all urban residents would take less than an hour to actually reach a police station, whereas 66% of people in rural areas had to travel for more than an hour, many of them even more than 2 or 3 hours depending on the county and location.

While a majority of respondents (60% of men and 55% of women) said they trusted the police in their area, 35% of the interviewees indicated having little or no trust in the police. In terms of equal treatment, 27% fully agreed that the police treat everyone the same, regardless of one's gender, tribe, religion, economic or social status. However, 20% partly agreed and 42% disagreed whereas 9% strongly disagreed. Women were generally found to be more sceptical. This points to the need for more concerted efforts in enhancing people's confidence in the police, through improving overall performance in terms of the quality of services provided and ensuring that the police treat all citizens are treated with respect and integrity.

According to the survey findings, 15% of people interviewed in the 5 counties had been the victim of a crime within the last 12 months, and 81% reported this to someone outside their family. Of those, 54% went to the police and 37% reported it to the local chief or elders. Overall, the percentage of crime victims was higher in urban areas (21%) than in rural areas (11%). Most of those who had reported a crime were more satisfied with the response by the chief or elders (77%) compared to the police (57%). All in all, 28% indicated they were dissatisfied and 7% even very dissatisfied with the police's response.

On average, 13% of all interviewees confirmed they had paid something to the police during the last 12 months. This happened more in urban (17%) than in rural areas (11%). As for the reason why, most people mentioned a 'transportation fee' (40%), paying something to file a complaint (29%), for the police to investigate their case (25%) or a fine they had to pay (19%). Almost half of all respondents agreed fully or partly that it is possible to avoid arrest by offering '*small thing*' to a police officer. Generally, women and people in rural areas were more convinced about the possibility to bribe the police to avoid arrest. All in all, 13% of respondents reported that they were specifically asked to pay something to a police officer during the last year. In terms of abusive behaviour, across the 5 counties only 6% of interviewees said they had often seen police officers abusing people, either verbally or physically *('cussing or beating')*, while 3% indicated having witnessed this very often.

Justice

In the 5 counties, an average of 21% of interviewees indicated that they or their household had been involved in a dispute ('*palava*' in Liberian English) during the last 12 months. In urban areas this was more frequent (30%) than in rural areas (16%). The most common disputes reported were divorce or marriage disputes (24%), domestic violence (22%), disputes about money and debt (13%), land disputes (13%) and theft (12%).

Most respondents (28%) reported they first went to the police to settle a major dispute, women more so than men, and urban residents more so than people living in rural areas. Overall, 17% reported going to the mayor/town chief for their major dispute, especially in rural areas. Men were more inclined to revert to traditional leaders than women. Further analysis showed that 43% of those who went to the police did so because they perceived it to be faster compared to other institutions/persons. People who went to elders or the community chairman often mentioned as the main reason that in their opinion it would be fairer. Overall, proximity (closeness) was cited as a less important reason for the various dispute resolution mechanisms. A relatively high proportion of respondents (46% overall) confirmed that they had to pay something to resolve their dispute.

All interviewees in the 5 counties were asked about the best place to solve 7 different types of disputes. As for 'family issues', 81% preferred to deal with this within the family, while disputes over money or stealing would best be settled by the town chief (42% and 33% respectively). For '*hurting palavas*' (disputes involving injuries or fighting) 34% of respondents indicated that these would best be handled by a court, or else the town chief (28%) or the police (22%). Land disputes should preferably be taken to a court (37%) or the Land Commission (30%). Regarding rape and murder cases, a significant majority agreed that these cases were to be taken to court (68% and 65% respectively) or else to the police (14% and 18% respectively). Overall, very few people said reverting to 'mob justice', i.e. taking the law in their own hands,) would be the best way to deal with any dispute. However, in murder cases on average 2% of respondents did mention mob justice.

A large majority of people (87%) indicated they knew where the nearest court was. However, whereas almost all urban residents would take less than an hour to reach a court, usually located in the county capitals, for many people in rural areas (38%) it meant travelling for more than an hour, especially in a large county like Sinoe with many remote areas. Access to courts was considered difficult by many respondents, with 35% indicating that in their view it was not easy or not easy at all to take a case to court, regardless of whether they had ever done so in practice. Overall, women perceived the access to courts more difficult than men.

In contrast, 90% of respondents felt it was easy or very easy to bring a case to the town chief. One of the factors regarding accessibility to court is the actual or perceived cost. An overwhelming majority of respondents (81%) indicated that in their opinion going to court was too expensive (46%) or far too expensive (35%).

Across the 5 counties, on average 30% of those interviewed said that in their view crime victims sometimes have to pay somebody to file a complaint, whereas 23% thought this happened often or very often (12%). A total of 42% of respondents indicated that sometimes people can avoid going to jail or get less punishment by paying somebody at the court. According to 17% this happens often or very often (5%). As with most questions, women were considerably more sceptical than men.

In terms of trust in the court system, 47% of respondents said they trusted the court system, with 10% trusting it very much. On the other hand, 28% only trusted the courts to some extent, whereas 14% said they did not trust the courts, and 2% not at all. Overall, 49% agreed or strongly agreed that the courts treat everyone the same, but the rest - women more so than men - did not agree, or only agreed to some extent. However, when asked about a specific type of case, just over 80% (both women and men) were of the opinion that women who have been victims of rape, sexual or gender-based violence (SGBV) are able to receive a fair hearing in court. Whether or not this positive perception is also reflected in reality would be interesting to further explore by looking at the outcome of these types of cases in court.

Regarding outreach activities, 19% of respondents in the 5 counties reported that sometimes organisations are coming to their community to teach about the justice system or how to better solve disputes. In most instances (66%) these were civil society organisations (CSOs), while in 11% of cases people came from government or from religious organisations (7%).

Regional Justice and Security Hubs

As part of this baseline survey, people were also asked whether they had heard about the Regional Justice and Security Hubs. Only a limited number (7% in total) confirmed they heard about the Hubs, almost twice as many men than women, and more people in urban (10%) than in rural areas (6%). People in Maryland (14%) and Grand Kru (12%) were somewhat more familiar with the Hub concept than those in other counties. In Grand Gedeh, where one of the 2 Regional Hubs will be located, only 2% of those interviewed was aware.

Not many people were able to mention the location of the Hubs. Out of those who said they heard about the Hubs, only 15% knew both of the 2 locations, i.e. Zwedru and Harper. A mere 36% managed to give 1 correct answer, especially people in Harper (Maryland), whereas the other 46% were unable to name any of the locations, which begs the question whether they really know what the Hub concept means. Since relatively little information about the Hubs has so far been shared, targeted outreach and awareness raising activities will be critical in providing accurate information about the various services, while at the same time managing expectations about what the Hubs will be able to provide in practical terms.

Overall, the findings of the survey suggest that all key stakeholders, including Government, traditional leaders and civil society organisations with support from the UN and other international development partners, will need to step up efforts to further improve people's access to and confidence in the police and the justice system. This means enhancing the quality, responsiveness and efficiency of the various justice and security service providers.

Adequate capacity in terms of human and material resources at various levels is essential to ensure that key functions are performed in a transparent and accountable manner. In addition, more outreach and awareness raising by Government and civil society organisations may be necessary to ensure people know how to access the justice system and how best to resolve various types of disputes, including through alternative and/or customary dispute resolution mechanisms at local level where applicable.

The findings of this survey can assist key stakeholders in the justice and security sector to identify specific actions in the short, medium and long term, taking into consideration the sometimes significant differences in perceptions and experiences between the various counties, rural and urban areas as well as between men and women.

Acknowledgements

Annex I: Map of Liberia

Annex II: Interviews conducted by County, District, Clan and Enumeration Area

County	District	Clan	Enumeration Area code	Total number of persons interviewed
Grand Gedeh	Gbao	Marbo #2	1502003042	33
Grand Gedeh	B'hai	B'Hai-Nicko	1514002031	34
Grand Gedeh	Cavala	Blawo	1516001012	34
Grand Gedeh	Gbao	Jaladaye	1502002011	35
Grand Gedeh	Cavala	Gborbo	1516003062	34
Grand Gedeh	Tchien	Tchien Menyea	1508004012	34
Grand Gedeh	Tchien	Tchien Menyea/Zwe #1	1508005081	35
Grand Gedeh	Tchien	Tchien Menyea/Zwe #3	1508007051	35
Grand Gedeh	Konobo	Lower Gbardru	1506001012	34
Grand Kru	Kpi	Tarwroken/Taybu	1818002022	44
Grand Kru	Bleebo	Karwalaken	1832001022	44
Grand Kru	Barclayville	Wakpeken Seator	1828001061	10
Grand Kru	Garraway	Upper Garraway	1836004032	44
Maryland	Nyorken	Gbitofla-fla	2706003012	34
Maryland	Gwelekpoken	Datiaken	2704004012	34
Maryland	Karluway#2	Wlebo	2710001012	34
Maryland	Pleebo/Sodoken	Pleebo/Gbolorbo	2712001041	33
Maryland	Pleebo/Sodoken	Pleebo/Gbolorbo	2712001161	33
Maryland	Harper	Harper City	2714007211	33
Maryland	Karluway#2	Yederobo	2710006022	34
Maryland	Pleebo/Sodoken	Twansiebo	2712005052	33
Maryland	Harper	Harper City	2714007011	33
Maryland	Harper	Harper City	2714007061	33
River Gee	Chedepo	Mt. Pennah	4202001032	38
River Gee	Glaro	Gbarlahn	4214002012	38
River Gee	Potupo	Kayken	4212001031	25
River Gee	Potupo	Kayken	4212001051	25
River Gee	Nyenebo	Dougboken	4220001052	38
Sinoe	Pynes Town	Kabadah	3922004021	13
Sinoe	Greenville	Zone 4-Seebeh	3902004051	13
Sinoe	Pynes Town	Gbliyee	3922003012	37
Sinoe	Greenville	Murrayville Township	3902005022	37
Sinoe	Bokon	Lower Bokon	3930001022	37
Sinoe	Dugbe River	Seehun	3932015012	38
Sinoe	Sanquin Dist#2	Upper Tarsue	3906001012	38
Sinoe	Sanquin Dist#2	Central Tarsue	3906002012	39
TOTAL				**1,200**