

Sustainable and Inclusive Peace in Liberia through Promoting Women Leadership and Participation in Civic and Political life and their Strengthened Role in Conflict Resolution

ZOA – LBR199 - Final Evaluation – October 2022

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Final Report

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This report presents the main outcomes of the project ‘Sustainable and inclusive peace in Liberia through promoting women leadership and participation in civic and political life and their strengthened role in conflict resolution’, a project funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. The project was carried out by ZOA Liberia in collaboration with Angie Brooks International Center (Liberia), the Liberia Peacebuilding Office, and four local civil society organizations. This report presents (a) a summary of the project activities, (b) an overview of the research methodology used for this evaluation, (c) the main results of the project in line with the project indicators, and (d) a holistic evaluation of the project in line with the OECD DAC guidelines for effective evaluations.

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If you have any questions about this report or about the research tools, please don't hesitate to contact us at liberiamonitors@gmail.com. Your feedback is highly appreciated.



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List of Acronyms

ABIC	Angie Brooks International Centre
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
AU	African Union
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EW	Eminent Women
EWER	Early Warning and Early Response
KAP	Knowledge Attitudes and Practices
KII	Key Informant Interview
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PAPD	Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
PBO	Peace Building Office
UNPBF	United Nations Peace Building Fund
WG	Women's Group
WIPNET	Women in Peacebuilding Network
WSR	Women Situation Room
YWCA	Young Women Christian Association



Executive Summary

The Sustainable and Inclusive Peace in Liberia project ran between 21 February 2021 and 21 August 2022 in Montserrado and Bong counties. The **specific objective** of the project was to **enhance women's capacity** and agency within the political, civic and mediation spaces and foster a more conducive environment for women's **leadership and participation** by addressing (negative) perceptions and norms. The project was funded by the United Nations Peace Building Fund, with a total budget of US \$1,289,614.

For this final evaluation, Liberia Monitors interviewed 189 women and youth, 91 citizens (indirect beneficiaries), 7 Eminent Women, 9 enablers and blockers, and representatives of most project stakeholders.

The project **achieved all its objectives** of the results-based framework. **100%** of respondents indicated that the project has contributed to improving **leadership** abilities of women, and **98%** believes that the project has increased women's **participation** in mediation spaces. Among indirect beneficiaries, **86%** report that citizens are coexisting **more peacefully** since the 2020 senatorial bi-elections. In total, **39** women have been **appointed into leadership positions** in the target communities.

The achievements of the **Women Situation Room (WSR)** activities converged around **peace and conflict resolution**. Women Mediators have gained both the confidence and skills mediate in conflicts. The achievements of the **Appreciative Inquiry (AI)** sessions were more associated with **empowerment** to breach traditional norms, **boldness**, and fearlessness, and leading the community towards peace and togetherness.

The interviews with **Eminent Women**, authorities, and traditional leaders revealed that the **perceptions** of both men and women have **changed** when it comes to leadership and civic participation. Thanks to the WSR and AI interventions, women don't just feel more confident to speak up, to take up leadership positions, and to mediate in conflicts, their **male counterparts** are also **more** supportive of women's participation.

Challenges do, however, remain. **Only 10%** of indirect beneficiaries **know about the WSR** mechanism, and across society the socio-economic **marginalization persists**. While women have been appointed to a wide range of positions, most of those positions are in the **lower ranks** of civic hierarchies. Additionally, while the WSR activities and the AI sessions have successfully helped many participants, much **work remains** in hundreds of other communities in the project counties, as well as the rest of Liberia. Finally, the methodologies of WSR and AI work best if the implementation is done **persistently** and **simultaneously** in the same communities. There is a risk that the benefits of the project disappear if there is no consistent follow up in the project locations.



OECD Guidelines for Effective Evaluations (Summary)

Relevance: The proportion of women in the national parliament (13% in 2020) and in managerial positions (20%) is still very low. The project **addresses explicit needs** for participation, mediation, and conflict resolution in and around electoral stages. Women can play an important role in peacebuilding because they are perceived as **impartial and accessible** by both citizens, authorities, and political actors.

Coherence: The project is both **internally and externally** coherent. It falls under the umbrella of UNSCR 1325, the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, as well as several regional and national policy frameworks of the African Union, the ECOWAS, and the Liberian government. The intervention also fits well within the expertise of UNPBF, ZOA, and ABIC.

Effectiveness: The project has successfully **achieved all its objectives** and outcomes mentioned in the results-based framework. Many authorities involved in the project have come to **accept** that women participation and leadership is a **win-win** endeavor. Male town chiefs and traditional leaders now feel more **confident** 'outsourcing' some of the conflict-resolution issues that involve women, giving them more time to focus on other tasks. The success of the project can be attributed to four major **success factors**: Its methodology, persistence, inclusion of men, and adaptability.

Efficiency: The intervention is efficient overall. The training of local CSOs to implement the AI sessions is both **cost-effective** and **sustainable**. A point of critique regards the **interaction** between the WSR and the AI methods. Although the two methodologies are clearly complementary to each other on paper, in practice the project was carried out as two simultaneous interventions in separate communities and with separate beneficiaries. This is unfortunate, because the WSR and AI interventions can clearly **reinforce** each other.

Impact: Apart from the direct impact on project participants, the intervention also has **higher-level effects** on Liberian society. The beneficiaries contribute to slowly changing norms within society. Several male authorities use the inclusion of women as a '**selling point**' in the public debate. Thanks to the successes of ABIC and many of the Eminent Women who have held positions of power in the past, Liberia has put itself on the map as a feminist country in West Africa.

Sustainability: Feminist waves across the world have shown that gender equity and empowerment of women is driven by **incremental** changes. The WSR and AI sessions **contribute** to this wave by changing the **beliefs** and **skills** of women and youth in Montserrado and Bong, as well as their participation. Given that the project outcomes benefit both women and their male counterparts, the benefits of the project are likely to last. Nevertheless, the progress achieved should not be taken for granted. There is a real **risk** that the gains in terms of empowerment and acceptance of female participation and leadership disappear over time. Across Liberia, **traditional societal norms persist** in many places, and women remain stigmatized, socio-economically disadvantaged, and targets of structural violence. The **elections** of October 2023 are a crucial test for Liberia's democratic consolidation. Due to the termination of the UNMIL in





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2018, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the volatile economic situation of Liberia during the past five years, a peaceful election is not guaranteed.

Recommendations

- **Reinforcing Methodologies:** In future projects, organize WSR activities and AI sessions in the same communities, (rather than separate ones) so that the effects reinforce each other.
- **Persistence breaks resistance:** One of the success factors of the project is its persistent methodology. In future projects, implementers should ensure that participants attend as many sessions as possible. Changing people's perspective on gender equality works best through persistent engagement.
- **Including male counterparts** was one of the success factors of the AI sessions. Many authorities involved in the project have come to accept that women participation and leadership is a win-win endeavor. Consider including more men in all aspects of the intervention, including the WSR.
- **Including women as a 'selling point':** President's Weah set an example by positioning himself as a 'feminist in chief'. Several authorities in the project have used their support for women participation as an electoral selling point. Future project should build on this momentum by engage with authorities to use the issue of women participation and leadership as an electoral strategy. After all, 50% of their constituents are female.
- **Physical WSR Structures:** WSR mechanisms work best when the organizational infrastructure is supported by physical offices that citizens can visit in person. For the 2023 elections, make sure the WSR has physical structures in place in each county.
- **Awareness:** Many citizens (approx. 90%) are not aware of the existence of the WSR. Through awareness campaigns, ensure that more citizens know about the WSR mechanism towards the upcoming elections.
- **Support local implementation of methodologies:** Given that ZOA is phasing out of Liberia, ensure there is continued financial support for local NGOs and CSOs to sustain AI sessions in future projects. This also means ensuring that there is a strategy in place to expand the WSR and AI methodologies to other counties in Liberia.
- **Risk Factor:** The biggest threat to the sustainability of the results is arguably the upcoming elections. Continue the project at least until the Presidential and Legislative Elections of 2023 and build upon the lessons learned.



	Project Objectives	Indicator	Target	Achieved	Answers on pp:
Overall objective	To promote women's leadership and participation in civic and political life and their role conflict prevention and resolution in Bong and Montserrat Counties. ¹	% Of participating women who report leadership abilities and available opportunities in both civil and political life as well as employing effective mediation process.	N/A	100%	18-21
	Enhance women's capacity and agency within the political, civic and mediation spaces and foster a more conducive environment for women's leadership and participation by addressing (negative) perceptions and norms.	% Participating women, political actors and traditional leaders who report increase representation and participation of women in civil, political and mediation spaces	N/A	98%	18-22
Outcome 1	Women promote co-existence and peaceful conflict resolution among political actors in the aftermath of the mid-term Senatorial Elections using the Women's Situation Room (WSR) mechanism.	1a. % Of participating women and youth who report (an increase in) sense of agency and civic responsibility to initiate and own mediation and conflict prevention/mitigation processes in their communities through the WSR mechanism	60%-80%	100%	23
		1b. % Of political actors, citizens and other relevant stakeholders who acknowledge the key role of women in conflict resolution and peaceful co-existence	60%-80%	97%	24
		1c. % Of citizens in target communities who report co-existence and peaceful conflict resolution in the aftermath of the elections	60%-80%	86%	25
Outcome 2	Local authorities and traditional leaders have improved perceptions on and increased commitment to women participation and leadership at local and county level	2a. % Of participating local authorities / traditional leaders who accept there is a problem of under representation of women in political and civic life	60%-80%	89%	26
		2b. % Of participating local authorities and traditional leaders who report improved perceptions and increased commitment to women participation and leadership	60%-80%	100%	27
		2c. # of locally led solutions which are agreed upon by women's groups and actors, gain written commitment and are implemented	4 ideas gain written commitment. ²	N/A	28-29
		2d. % of participants in the appreciative inquiry visits who report increased confidence, knowledge, and skills to represent women's issues, demands and aspirations.	60%-80%	100%	30

¹ The overall objective and specific objective are not part of the logical framework of the project but have been added for the purpose of the end Evaluation to give guidance to measuring higher level impact.

² Becoming tangible outcomes



1. Project Overview (outputs)

The Sustainable and Inclusive Peace in Liberia through Promoting Women Leadership and Participation in Civic and Political Life and their Strengthened Role in Conflict Resolution project (from here on **Sustainable and Inclusive Peace Project**) took place in the aftermath of the December 2020 mid-term Senatorial Elections and the Constitutional Referendum, at the same time working towards the 2023 Presidential and Legislative elections. The project was funded by the United Nations Peace Building Fund, with a total budget of US \$1,289,614.

The target areas of the intervention are **Montserrado** and **Bong Counties**. In both counties, there are large inter-generational tensions, political marginalization and the exclusion of women and youth from formal decision-making processes. ZOA and ABIC promoted **women's leadership** and **participation** in civic and political life and their **strengthened role in conflict prevention** and resolution among political actors. The project aimed to enhance women's capacity and agency within the political, civic and mediation spaces through (a) the **Women's Situation Room (WSR)** mechanism and (b) basic **Appreciative Inquiry (AI)**.

The overall objective of the project was to promote women's leadership and participation in civic and political life and their role in conflict prevention and resolution in Bong and Montserrado Counties. **The specific objective** was to enhance women's capacity and agency within the political, civic and mediation spaces and foster a more conducive environment for women's leadership and participation by addressing (negative) perceptions and norms. The project objectives were divided into two specific outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** Women promote co-existence and peaceful conflict resolution among political actors in the aftermath of the mid-term Senatorial Elections using the WSR mechanism.
- **Outcome 2:** Local authorities and traditional leaders have improved perceptions on and increased commitment to women participation and leadership at local and county level.

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Under outcome 1, the project brought together 2000 people from **20 communities** in Montserrado and Bong County.³ Under output 1.1., consultation meetings were held with local women and youth groups to outline their views on the post-election situation and to inform the women's peace marches. Subsequently, ABIC selected 120 women and 80 youth for Training of Trainers workshops, in which they taught them about the WSR mechanism, track II mediation, and mediation dialogues. The people who were trained then went back to their communities to teach their own members about the things they learned. Afterwards, they reached out to 343 influential national political stakeholders, and demand they maintain peace and promote co-existence.

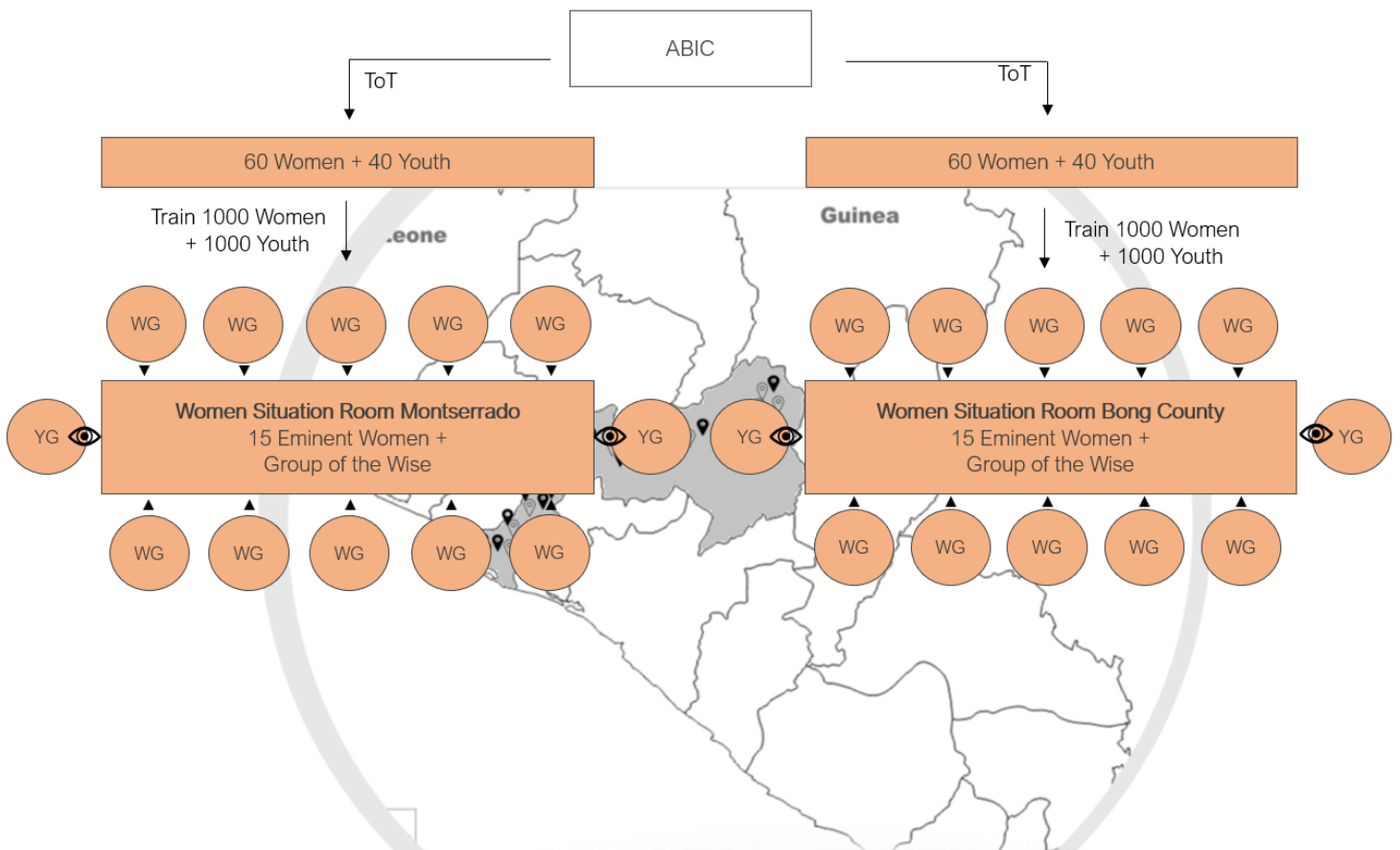
From the women's groups, **30 Eminent Women (EW)** were selected to receive knowledge on the WSR mechanism and expert training on Track II mediation. These women were to be certified as 'woman mediators'. After receiving training, the WSR members collected information on potential elections related threats from grassroots level and set up consultations with conflicting political actors and organized 10 Women's Mediation Dialogues, in which they explored ideas for resolution.

Under output 1.2, 2094 women peace activists and 443 non-project participants marched to demonstrate for the inclusion of women at the decision-making table. Additionally, 120 peace messages were recorded, 96 of which are being played on the radio.

³ These are not the same communities as the ones that ZOA worked with under outcome 2 (although there is some overlap).



Under output 1.3., **400 youth and 10 peace monitors** were trained in the WSR mechanism in 30 peer-to-peer dialogue workshops. They received conflict resolution training and coordinated peer-to-peer peace processes to prevent and reduce post-elections violence. Their leaders (5 female, 5 male) were selected to become peace monitors to oversee the youth activities and to monitor progress. They supported the women’s groups in the WSR mechanism to advocate for nonviolence and peaceful co-existence in their communities.⁴ 54% of trained youth reported nonviolence and peaceful conflict resolution in their communities in the aftermath of the senatorial elections.



⁴ Youth groups include female and male members aged 18-35, including people living with disabilities.



What is a Women's Situation Room?

The Women's Situation Room (WSR) is a civil society initiative that aims at preventing and mitigating electoral violence. WSR train and empower women to be active political agents, to promote peaceful and transparent elections, and to detect and mitigate security threats surrounding electoral campaigns.⁵ Before, during and after elections, they serve as a nerve center that gathers and analyses information about electoral fraud, voter-intimidation, and other forms of electoral tensions and abuse of power. When necessary, they call upon the electoral committee, the police, or traditional leaders to mitigate the conflict and to promote peace and transparency.

The first WSR was established in Liberia in the run-up to the 2011 presidential elections. Under the coordination of the Angie Brooks International Centre (ABIC), women's groups and youth groups came together to observe the elections, to advocate for peaceful elections, and to promote dialogue between conflicting parties. This structure allowed the WSR to detect electoral tensions early on, as well as to respond to conflicts in collaboration with government institutions and traditional leaders. During the 2017 elections, the WSR was active in all of Liberia's electoral districts, providing 300 elections observers and 73 peace monitors and detecting and / or intervening in approximately 800 incidents.

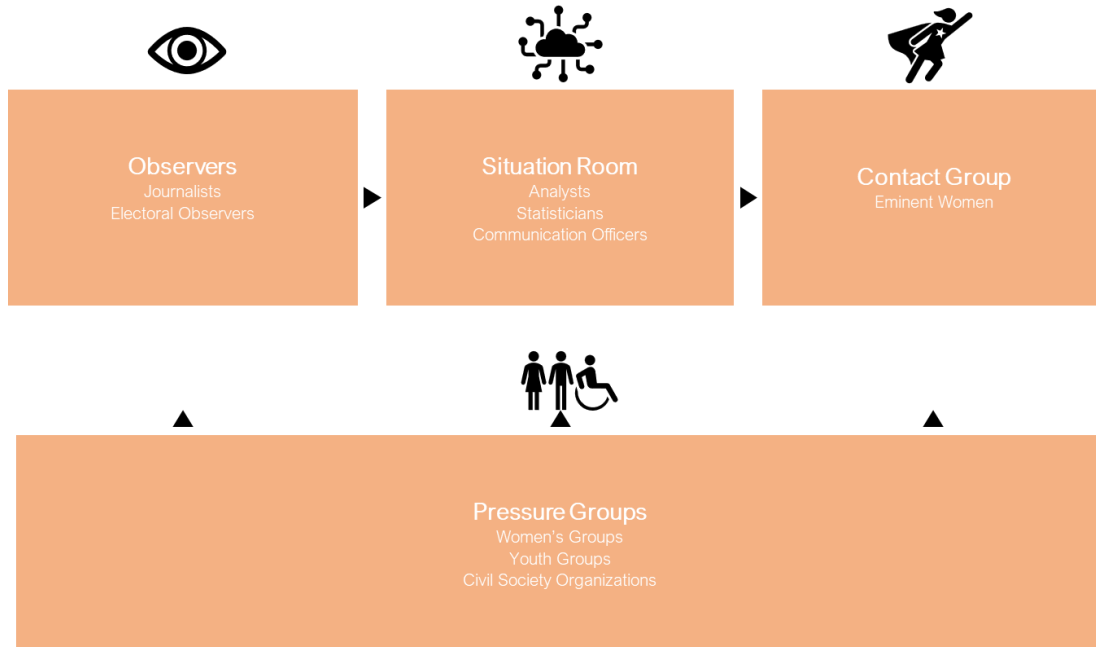
The activities of the WSR are threefold:

- **Mobilization:** Organizing, engaging, and encouraging women, youth, and other civil society actors to be involved peacefully in the electoral process.
- **Monitoring:** Monitor the governance of the electoral process and detecting incidents and violent threats using electoral observers, information technology, and in collaboration with the media.
- **Mediation:** Preventive diplomacy, engaging with key stakeholders to ensure an inclusive and peaceful environment around the elections, and following up on incidents through mediation.

The WSR is typically organized around four organizational entities: (1) Pressure groups are civil society organizations such as women groups and youth groups who mobilize citizens for peacebuilding activities and who advocate for peaceful elections. They are the hands of the organization; (2) Observers are trained elections observers and journalists who monitor the electoral process and who report on noteworthy incidents. They are the antennae of the organization; (3) In the situation room itself, analysts, statisticians, and communications officers form the nerve center of the operation. They gather and analyze incoming information and provide early warning when necessary; (4) The contact group consists of Eminent Women who are trained to mediate and organize peace dialogues with key stakeholders. They are the voice of the organization.

⁵ Drummond, 2015 ([LINK](#))





The WSR model fits well within Liberia’s National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (2019-2023), as well as Liberia’s Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD, 2018-2023), and Liberia’s National Gender Policy (2018-2022). After its initial success in Liberia, the WSR structure was adopted and replicated in Senegal (2012), Sierra Leone (2012, 2018), Kenya (2013), Zimbabwe (2013), Mali (2013), Guinea-Bissau (2014), Nigeria (2015), Uganda (2016), Ghana (2016), and Liberia again (2017). The African Union has also adopted the WSR model as a best-practice model for other countries. The WSR model is also in line with the broader UN agenda on Women Peace and Security pursuant UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). With respect to the UN sustainable development goals, the WSR is a relevant tool to contribute to goal 5 (Gender Equality), specifically targets 5.1. (End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere) and 5.5. (Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life).



Under outcome 2, local authorities and traditional leaders selected 20 key public actors, divided into 6 'enablers' and 4 'blockers' per county.⁶ Each key public actor received six AI sessions to explore (negative) gender norms and perceptions, barriers to and opportunities for increased civic and political participation of women and other marginalized groups.⁷ The actors were challenged and encouraged to develop potential pathways for increased women leadership and participation and to take up leadership roles.

Simultaneously, 20 women's groups (400 women + 100 men) participated in ten AI sessions to explore gender dynamics, female ambitions, barriers and opportunities for equal representation and participation.⁸ The AI sessions encouraged women to identify their strengths and to build their confidence and skills through a creative and interactive process, which was unique to each group and location.⁹ Each women's group also selected five male counterparts to have their buy-in in empowering women to take up leadership roles. Representatives from each group came together twice per county to explore commonalities and differences in their experiences linked to women's civic and political participation.

Finally, the public actors and the women's groups were brought together in a **joint workshop** in which inclusive dialogue was fostered to share experiences, learn and to find and commit to the implementation of tangible solutions to enable and improve women political and civic participation. The groups developed **action plans** and were encouraged to put commitments in writing. Follow up sessions were organized by the implementing CSOs in the communities of the women's groups to ensure the outcomes of the county level dialogues were communicated and to followed up on.



⁶ Enablers are the most suitable actors for promoting women participation. Blockers are influential actors who are unsupportive of women participation. At least 4 enablers are Eminent Women / Women Mediators.

⁷ The AI sessions are organized by four CSOs: Liberia National Rural Women Structure, Young Women's Christian Association of Liberia, Impact Girls, and Bong County Women Organization.

⁸ Each group has 25 members and includes female youth, elderly women, women with disabilities, and women with different political affiliations and socio-economic, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. Each group also includes 5 men.

⁹ **Locations for Montserrado:** Bay Town, Parker Corner, Chocolate City, Goba-Chop, King Gray, Careysburg West Point, Careysburg Mannah Town, Bentol, West Point, Mono Town West. **Locations for Bong:** Gbelekpelai, Jennepleta, Duta, Blameyeya, Chief Compound, Millionaire Quarter, Kornie, SKT, Suakoko, Gbartala.



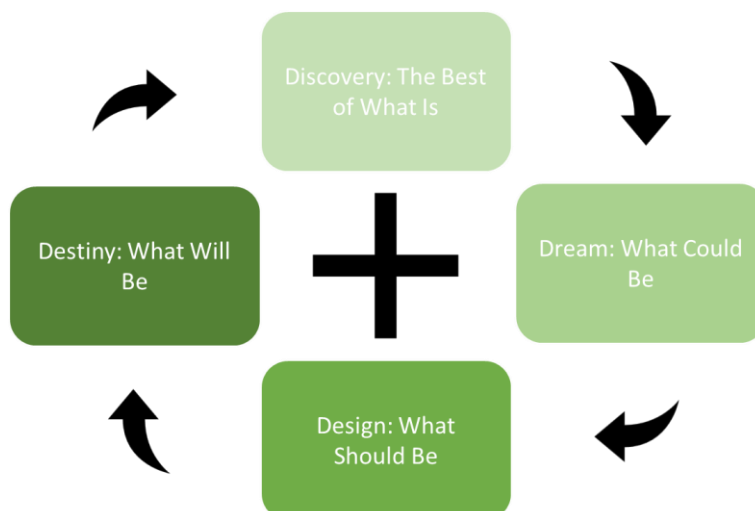
What is Appreciative Inquiry?

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a method of institutional change. Rather than focusing on problems or deficiencies in an institution, AI advocates for people to investigate into the best of what already exists. This allows them to focus their attention on the things that already work and find ways to expand on these strengths. This positive core helps people imagine and design a possible future which builds on the positive aspects that already exist, rather than focusing on fixing the things that don't work.

The method of AI has five principles:

1. **Constructivism:** What we believe to be true determines what we do. Through day-to-day interactions, we co-construct the organizations we inhabit. AI can stimulate new discourses and new lines of action.
2. **Simultaneity:** When we inquire into human systems, we change them. Questions are never neutral, they are directional. Social systems move into the direction of the questions we ask most persistently and the topics we discuss most passionately.
3. **Poetry:** Organizational life is expressed and co-authored by the stories people tell each other, including the words and perspectives they use. AI puts effort into carefully choosing words that inspire the best in people.
4. **Anticipation:** Our image of the future guides what we do today. AI uses positive imagery on to re-design our collective expectations on the horizon.
5. **Positivity:** Positive affect, social bonding, inspiration, and joy can help organizations in building momentum and sustainable change. AI promotes strong relations between people, especially between groups in conflict.

In Liberia, four CSOs that participated in the project used AI in relation to local authorities and women's groups. The 5 principles of AI were translated into a 4-dimensional model, which was designed by ZOAC to appeal to the project participants.



2. Research Methodology and Limitations

In August 2022, the consultants took three days to study (a) the project’s logical framework (b) internal reports (c) the baseline report, and (d) additional conceptual literature on WSR and AI methods. Interviews were also scheduled with ZOA, UNPBF, and ABIC to get better acquainted with the project. On the 14th of August 2022, all stakeholders received an inception report with proposals for the methodology and research tools. After incorporating feedback from all project partners, the final research tools were prepared for the training.

Kobo Collect versions of the research tool can be found through the following links:

- Tool 1 – 189 Women & Youth ([LINK](#))
- Tool 2 – 91 Citizens / Indirect beneficiaries ([LINK](#))
- Tool 3 – 6 Eminent Women ([LINK](#))
- Tool 4 – 9 Enablers & Blockers ([LINK](#))
- Tool 5 – KII Project Stakeholders – OECD Guidelines ([LINK](#))

Training of the research tools and preparation for the fieldwork took place the 6th – 8th of September. The field research itself took 11 working days between the 12th and 27th of September. All data was collected in Kobo Toolbox and is available in Microsoft Excel (see Annex B). Please find below an overview of the data collected, including footnotes on limitations where applicable.

Tool 1|1 – KAP Surveys - 189 Women & Youth: Liberia Monitors designed surveys to interview approximately 189 women and youth who participated in the project in 20 project locations. In total, 122 adult women, 58 youth (32F / 26M), and 8 adult men were interviewed.

Day	Morning (09:00)	Afternoon (14:00)
Monday 12/9	Westpoint	Chocolate City
Tuesday 13/9	Gobachop	King Gray
Wednesday 14/9	Careysburg	Todee
Thursday 15/9	New Kru Town	Clara Town
Friday 16/9	Bentol City	District #8
Monday 19/9	Gbelekpelai	Blameyea
Tuesday 20/9	Millionnaire Quarter	Duta Town
Wednesday 21/9	Jennepletai	Suakoko
Thursday 22/9	Gbarnga	Cuttington
Friday 23/9	Palala	Weinzu

*AI sessions were held in green communities, while WSR in orange communities.

Of all participants, 99 people participated in the Women’s Situation Room trainings organized by ABIC, while 87 participated in the AI sessions organized by ZOA and the 4 local CSOs.¹⁰

	Women’s Situation Room	Appreciative Inquiry
Female	71	81
Male	28	6

¹⁰ 1 woman received both the WSR and AI trainings.



The focus of the questions was on the lessons learned from the WSR mechanism trainings and / or the Appreciative Inquiry sessions (depending on which training they received), as well as the outcomes of the workshops and the actions plans that resulted from it.

Tool 2|2 – KAP Surveys | 91 random citizens: Parallel to the FGDs with Women and Youth who participated in the project, Liberia Monitors also interviewed 90 citizens who did not participate in the project (59F / 31M). All respondents interviewed were from the project communities (both ABIC and ZOA communities), and approximately 95% of the respondent was aware of the project's existence, for example because they had heard about it through a family member or from a local women's organization. The questions of the surveys were focused on outcome indicators 1b and 1c.¹¹

Tool 3 – KI Interviews | 7 Eminent Women: Liberia Monitors conducted Key Informant interviews with 7 Eminent Women. The focus of the interviews was on their knowledge of the WSR mechanism and Track II Mediation, as well as the outcomes of the Women's Mediation Dialogues and the transfer of knowledge to local Women's Groups.

Tool 5 – Key Informant Interviews | 9 Enablers and Blockers: Liberia Monitors conducted Key Informant Interviews with 5 enablers and 4 blockers. The focus of the interviews was on the lessons learned from the Appreciative Inquiry sessions, as well as on the pathways for increased women leadership and participation. For the sake of privacy, the names of the interviewees are only known to the researchers.

Tool 6 – Stakeholder Interviews – OECD Guidelines: Throughout the data collection process, Liberia Monitors scheduled interviews with stakeholders representing ZOA, ABIC, UNPBF, and the CSOs involved in the AI activities.¹² The interviews were structured in line with the OECD / DAC guidelines for effective evaluations, to assure that relevant questions are asked in relation to the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Additionally, the survey included questions about the project's flexibility, interaction between the project activities, reinforcing results, gender equity and women empowerment, CSO capacity, and innovation.

¹¹ Of citizens in target communities who report co-existence and peaceful conflict resolution in the aftermath of the elections

¹² Impact Girls, YWCA, Liberia National Rural Women Structure, Bong County Women Organization.





Ophelia Hoff
Former Mayor of Monrovia



Frances Johnson Morris
1st Female Chief
Justice of Liberia



Olubanke King-Akerele
Former Minister of Foreign Affairs

Korpu Howard
President of National Rural Women
Structure– Montserrado



Maureen L. Shaw
Entrepreneur & Co-founder of
the Liberian Business
Association



Cllr. Pearl Brown Bull
Signer of the Liberian
Constitution



**Cllr. Dr. Yvette
Chesson-Wureh**
Initiator WSR, Coordinator
ABIC, Co-Chair of Fem Wise

Eminent Women Interviewed for Final Evaluation



Limitations

The research conducted for the final evaluation has several limitations that the reader should consider. The most important ones are (1) the issue of self-reported data, (2) the issue of privacy, and (3) the small sub-populations on which some analyses are based.

Firstly, self-reported data is oftentimes referred to by social and behavioral scientists as the 'lowest form of data.' Research based on self-reporting is prone to several biases that must be properly understood to interpret data correctly. Most importantly, people who report on their own happiness, abilities, or behavior tend to be overly optimistic. This can be due to an 'optimist bias' that makes people genuinely overestimate their qualities but is more likely to result from people giving socially acceptable answers and avoiding sensitive topics, especially when it concerns the private sphere. For example, the data collected on participation, empowerment, and acceptance of female leadership is likely to be more positive than presented.

The second issue regards privacy. Before starting the survey, respondents were promised that their data will not be shared publicly and that their names will not appear anywhere. Indeed, the interviewers did not ask for the respondent's name or contact information so that the data collected remains anonymous.¹³ Additionally, the enumerators were trained to make respondents feel at ease and to prompt them to answer all questions honestly and without fear. Nevertheless, some respondents might feel insecure about providing criticism of the project.

Thirdly, the dataset comes with some statistical limitations. Under research tool 1, all questions were answered by 189 respondents. This allows us to assume that the results are representative of the full project population. More care should however be taken with results that concern only part of the respondents. For example, only 91 indirect beneficiaries were interviewed, meaning the results have a margin of error of approximately 10%. Finally, the data provided by enablers and blockers (9), and Eminent Women (7) have no statistical significance. Their stories are indicative of the achievements and obstacles of the project, but they should not be assumed to be representative of the full population.

Finally, due to miscommunication during the fieldwork, several respondents could not be interviewed. For research tools 1, 2, and 5, this was especially problematic in the towns of Duta Town and Blameyea, in which participants were not properly informed about the arrival of the research team. For research tool 6, the OECD questions were not answered by ABIC.

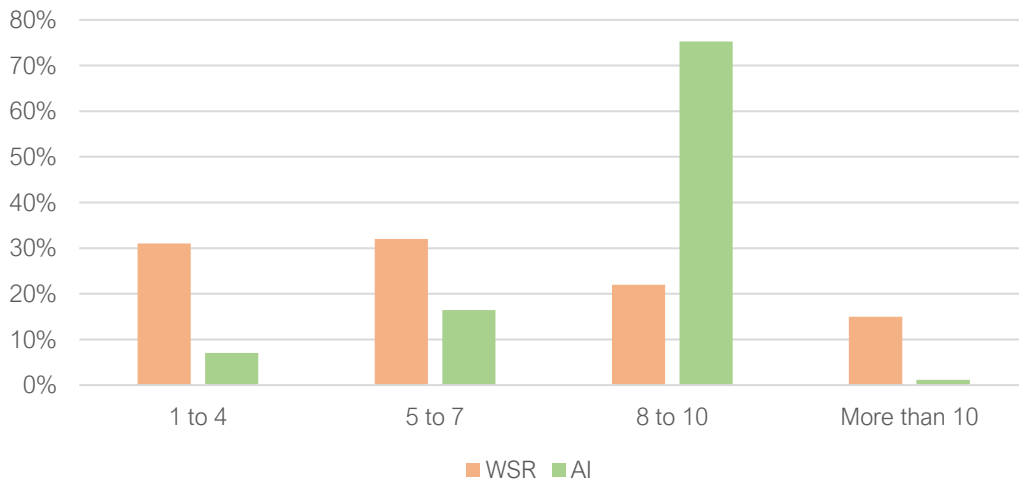
The limitations described above should not lead the reader to dismiss the results presented in this report. The results give a comprehensive overview of people's psychological health, family relationships, community interactions, and local governance. Readers that keep in mind the limitations of the data will be better equipped to interpret the results presented.

¹³ With the exception of public figures, such as Eminent Women. For enablers and blockers, the names of the interviewees are only known to the researchers.

3. Project Outcomes

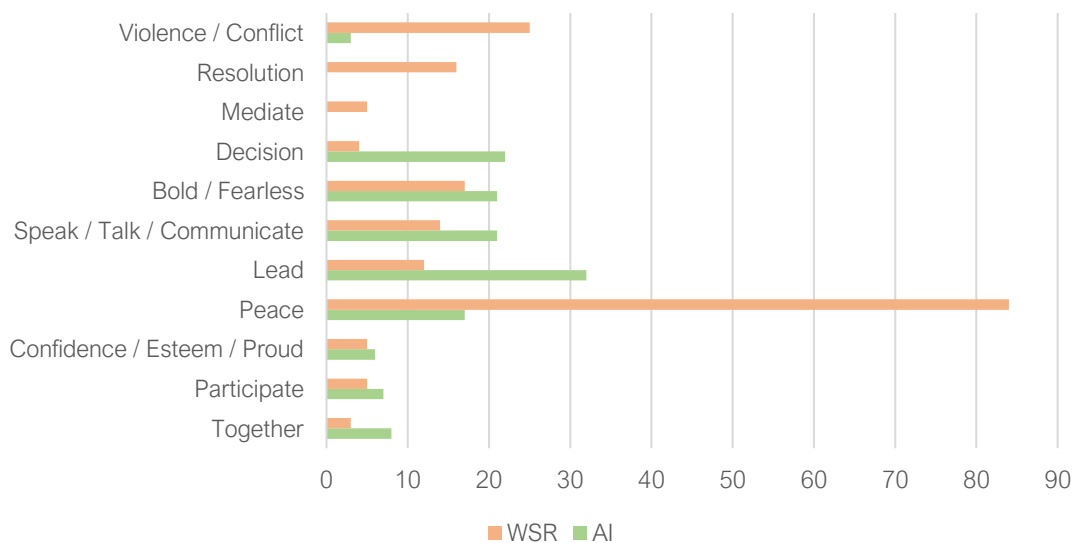
Altogether, the 189 respondents of the survey attended an average of 7 WSR sessions (6.1 sessions for men / 7.4 sessions for women) and 8.7 AI sessions (8.7 for women / 8.2 for men) (out of 10 possible). In both cases, respondents were overwhelmingly positive about the organization of the sessions.

How many sessions did you attend?

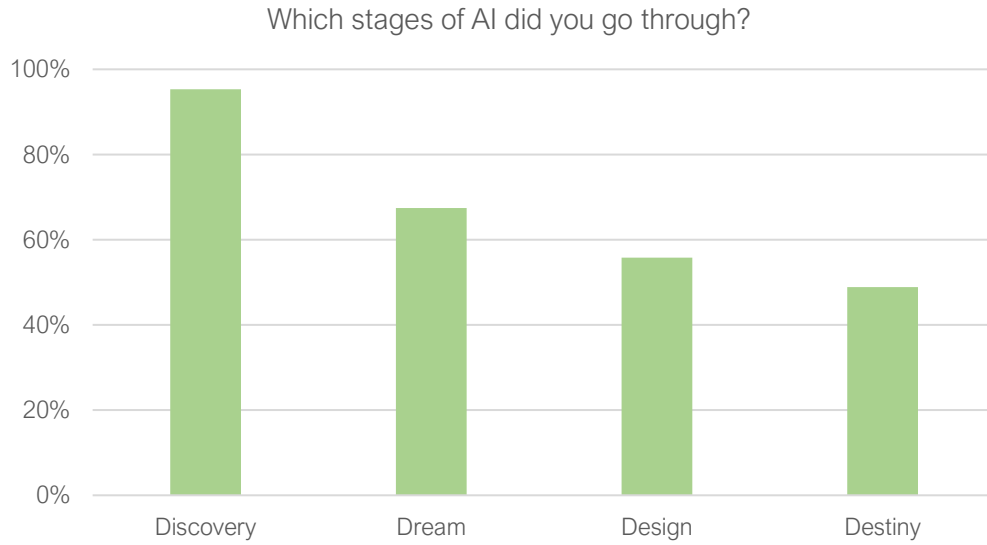


Participants were also asked what they considered the biggest achievements of the intervention. Whereas the achievements of the WSR activities converged around peace and conflict resolution, the achievements of the AI sessions were more associated with empowerment to breach traditional norms, boldness, and fearlessness, and leading the community towards peace and togetherness.

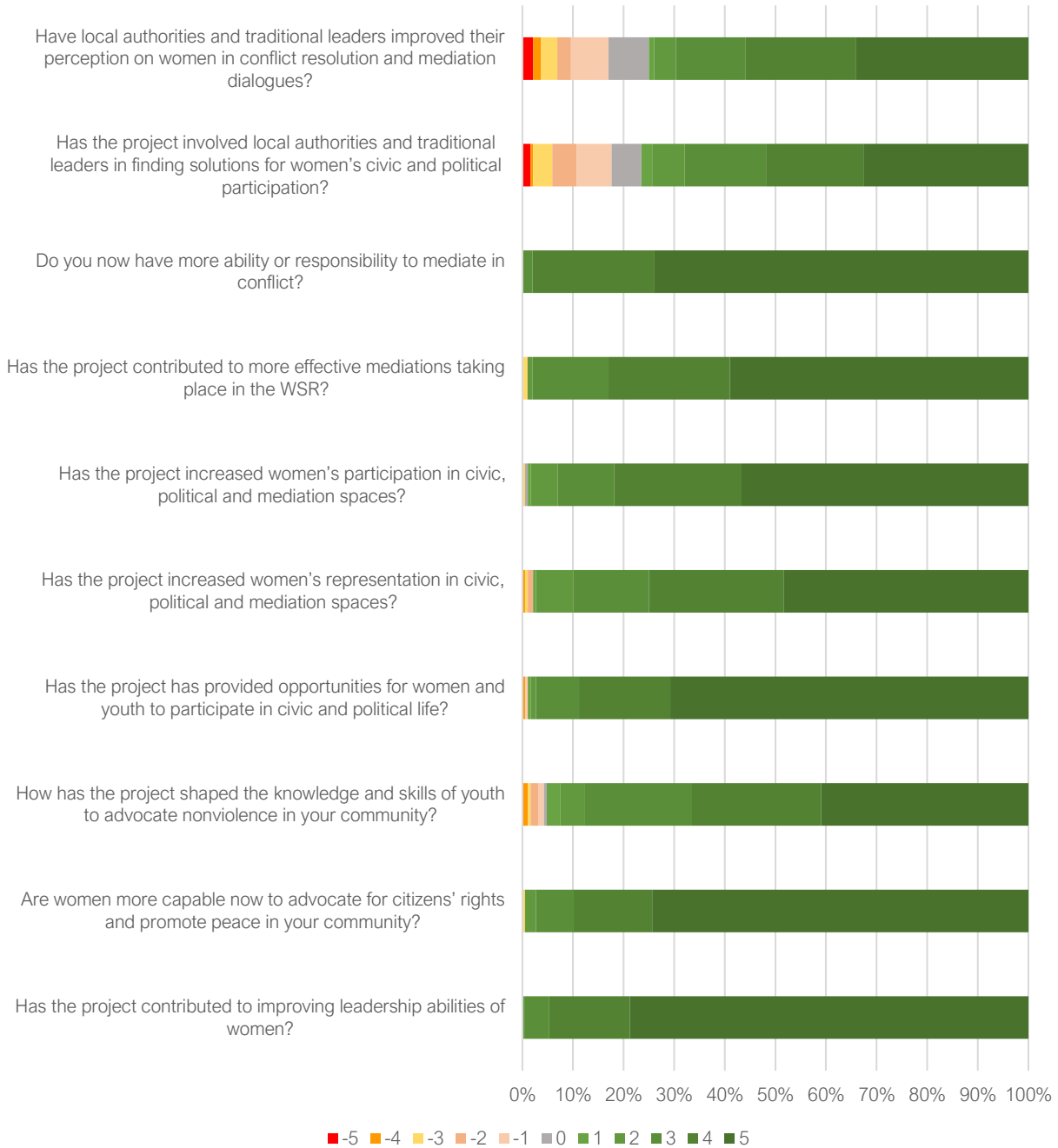
Project Achievements - WSR & AI - Keywords



For the AI sessions, people were also asked about the stages they went through. Naturally, participants who attended more sessions were more likely to go through all four stages.



Opinions on women, leadership, and civic participation*



¹⁴ Answers from 189 respondents interviewed under tool 1. Answers range from -5 (dramatic deterioration / completely disagree) to +5 (dramatic improvement / completely agree)



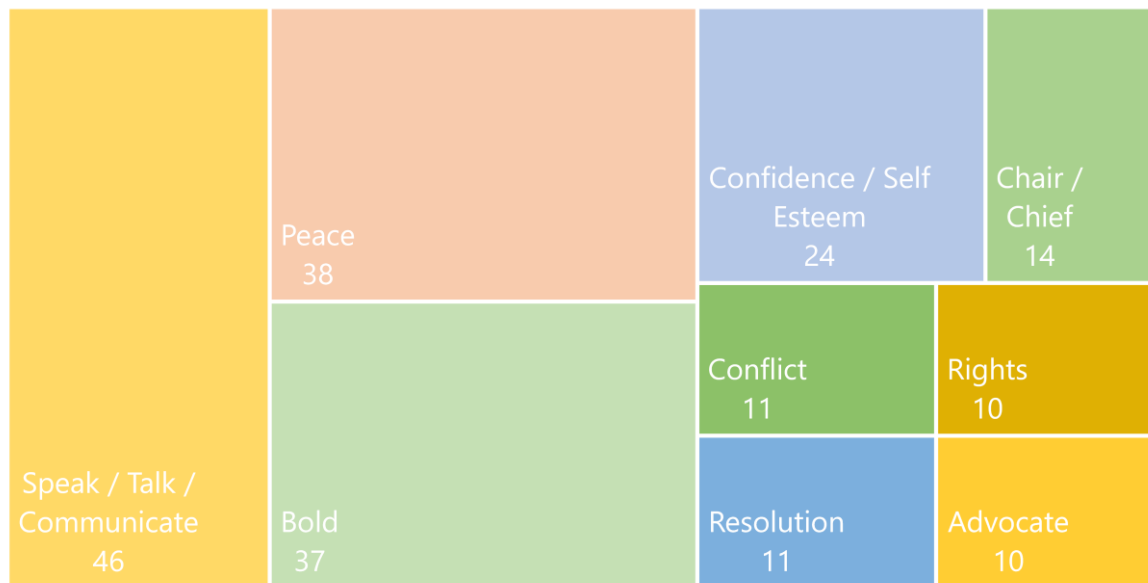
Overall Objective: To promote women’s leadership and participation in civic and political life and their role conflict prevention and resolution in Bong and Montserrado Counties.¹⁵

% Of participating women who report leadership abilities and available opportunities in both civil and political life as well as employing effective mediation process.

100% of women and youth interviewed under tool 1 answered that the project has contributed to improving **leadership abilities** of women. Women are less afraid to speak up and are described by many respondents as bolder and having higher levels of self-esteem. An overview of the keywords used most frequently when explaining how women leadership and participation has changed is presented below.

In terms of opportunities, **99%** of respondents believe that there are now **more opportunities** for women and youth to participate in civic and political life. Similarly, **98%** believes that the project has increased women’s **participation** in mediation spaces, and **99%** of WSR participants agree that the project has contributed to more **effective mediations** taking place in the WSR.

Women Leadership - Keywords



7 Eminent Women and 9 Enablers and Blockers also commented on the impact of the WSR mechanism on women’s leadership. All of them agree that women’s leadership capabilities have improved. Respondents’ comments include the following:

“The women themselves saw that in the past they never had the chance to speak out and contribute on the table to form part of the problem solving. So, it has enhanced their abilities to be constructive members and see that they can contribute to the improvement of society.”
(Eminent Woman, Monrovia)

¹⁵ The overall objective and specific objective are not part of the logical framework of the project but have been added for the purpose of the end Evaluation to give guidance to measuring higher level impact.



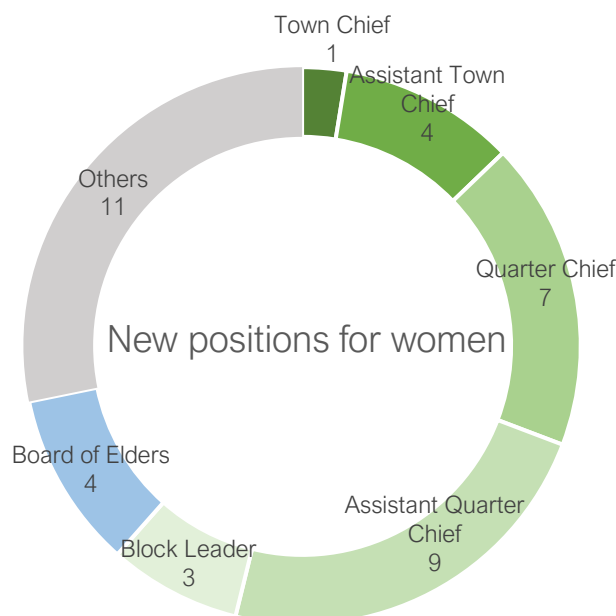
“It witnessed an amazing change among WSR participants. We have more women stepping up and advocating for their issues. For example, after we had the training, President Weah visited our county as part of his tour. I asked the local women if they were prepared, because part of the training was about teaching women how to prepare for important meetings. Before a meeting, have you discussed what your main issues are? Do you know who are the stakeholders you need to talk to? And are you prepared to present your issues in a clear and structured manner? I can say that they were very prepared.” (Angie Brooks Representative, Monrovia)

Specific Objective: Enhance women’s capacity and agency within the political, civic and mediation spaces and foster a more conducive environment for women’s leadership and participation by addressing (negative) perceptions and norms.

% Of participating women, political actors and traditional leaders who report increase representation and participation of women in civil, political and mediation spaces

Most women and youth who participated in the project report that there is an increase in **representation (98%)** and **participation (99%)** of women in civil, political, and mediation spaces. The seven enablers and blockers that were interviewed for the final evaluation all **(100%)** agreed that the project helped in increasing women’s opportunities in politics, civic functions, and mediation activities.

However, respondents also identified several remaining obstacles to women representation and participation. For example, while women are more represented in advocacy and peacebuilding activities, their representation in politics remains limited. Similarly, while many women in the project have achieved positions as a (assistant) block leader, secretary, or assistant town chief, it is still hard for them to achieve positions such as town chief, or superintendent.¹⁶



¹⁶ Although interestingly, both Montserrado and Bong currently have a female superintendent.



Outcome 1: Women promote co-existence and peaceful conflict resolution among political actors in the aftermath of the mid-term Senatorial Elections using the WSR mechanism.

1a. % Of participating women and youth who report (an increase in) sense of agency and civic responsibility to initiate and own mediation and conflict prevention/mitigation processes in their communities through the WSR mechanism.

All women and youth (**100%**) who participated in the WSR training reported an increase in the sense of **agency** and civic **responsibility** to initiate and own mediation and conflict prevention / mitigation processes in their communities through the WSR mechanism. Some of the comments from respondents include the following:

Respondents were also asked if they think that the project contributed to more **effective mediations** taking place in the WSR. **99%** of respondents answered this question positively. Nevertheless, respondents did mention some obstacles that remain to make the WSR mechanism more effective. The most important ones include:

- More women want to be included in the WSR trainings.
- In some communities, due to traditional norms, women don't have full rights to investigate cases.
- Still not enough women in leadership positions.
- In many communities, women are still not fully accepted as leaders.
- Insufficient (or lack of) government support, both for women leaders and local leadership generally.

Finally, people were asked if they think that local authorities and traditional leaders have **improved their perception on women** in conflict resolution and mediation dialogues. **75%** of respondents answered this question positively, whereas 25% reported that there was no improvement or a deterioration. This is in line with some of the comments mentioned above and shows that WSR mechanisms must continue their efforts to achieve full gender equality.

Quotes from Respondents

*"In the training we learned that to make peace you must **talk less, listen more**, and **don't take sides** in a conflict."*

*"From this training I have been able to **create a women's group** called Girl Shine."*

*"I can **talk** to the people in confusion together to make peace together. I can do the talking **together** and not one on one."*

*"The best one is the way we were taught to **mediate** cases. I am almost serving as a **leader** and some people now call me **chairlady**."*

*"I am **brave**. I have good **listening skills** I can **judge** very well, thanks to the **protection** of this program."*

*"Because of the program I am now able to make peace between people. I now know my **rights** and **responsibilities** in the home and community."*



1b. % Of political actors, citizens and other relevant stakeholders who acknowledge the key role of women in conflict resolution and peaceful co-existence

97% of citizens and 100% of Eminent Women acknowledge that **women play a key role** in conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence. All Eminent Women also acknowledge that the project helped in increasing female representation in civic, political, and mediation positions. Among citizens, 90% think women’s groups have improved their capacity to advocate for citizens’ rights and responsibilities. Among enablers and blockers, 7 out of 9 (78%) say that local authorities and traditional leaders have become more accepting of female representatives in political and civic life.

At the same time, 89% of enablers and blockers recognize that there is still a problem of underrepresentation of women in political and civil life (also see outcome 2a). Additionally, only 10% of citizens report to have heard about the WSR mechanism. This indicates that much work remains in terms of increasing awareness of the WSR in the run-up to the 2023 elections.



Quotes from Respondents

*“Women have been **talking** to some **major actors** and even those like politicians that might trigger conflicts and disputes in the community or county.”*

*“Women are making peace **faster** than the men and they are succeeding.”*

*“Women use **their kind influence** more than men. The women always try to make all parties feel **happy** after investigation.”*
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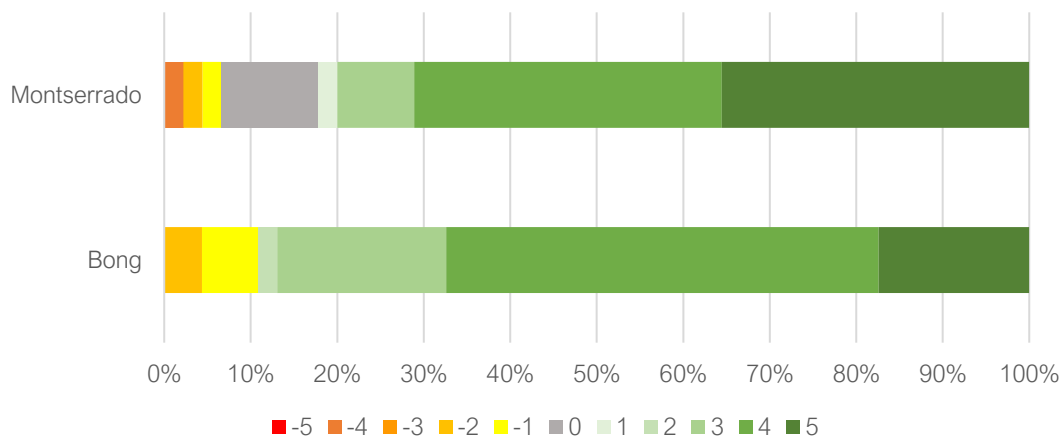
*“The women are the one who are **fast to engage** in my community than men who response are very slow”*



1c. % Of citizens in target communities who report co-existence and peaceful conflict resolution in the aftermath of the elections

Of the 91 people interviewed, 86% report that citizens are coexisting more peacefully since the 2020 senatorial bi-elections. There are some variations between citizens in Montserrado and Bong, with citizens in Bong offering a slightly more positive account of the coexistence of citizens (89%) than in Montserrado (82%). Arguably this is due to the fact that Monrovia is home to more public protests at the national level.

Since the senatorial bi-elections in December 2020, are citizens coexisting more peacefully?



Outcome 2: Local authorities and traditional leaders have improved perceptions on and increased commitment to women participation and leadership at local and county level.

2a. % Of participating local authorities / traditional leaders who accept there is a problem of under representation of women in political and civic life.

89% of enablers and blockers (8 out of 9 interviewed) recognize that there is a problem of underrepresentation of women in political and civil life.¹⁷ Out of the 4 blockers that were interviewed for the final evaluation, only 1 did not recognize the problem of under representation of women. This indicates that most blockers shifted their position on this issue during the project. All in all, the respondents provided the following explanations for their answers:

Position	Women Under Represented?	Explanation
Blocker	Yes	More opportunities for women participation need to be created.
Blocker	Yes	It's because they are human and are always trying to keep themselves away.
Blocker	Yes	Yes, many women feel that they shame and inferior. Sometimes they feel that they will be marginalized.
Blocker	No	There are five women as town chief and one woman as general town chief.
Enabler	Yes	When it comes to these issues, they have been encouraged but the fear of tradition is a challenge as it relates to leadership. It's a contributing factor for underrepresentation.
Enabler	Yes	We need to continue to encourage women to drive away inferiority complex from them and the government should help them financially.
Enabler	Yes	Most of the women are afraid because of marginalization and inferiority complex. They are even feeling that it is not important because of marginalization.
Enabler	Yes	I think ABIC has started the process and the women have political rights to participate in all these processes. They need to help push for the 30 percent. ¹⁸
Enabler	Yes	The women being in politics is a challenge, they are way behind the line even though they are in majority.

¹⁷ Although 2 blockers answered 'No' in the survey, their explanations reveal that they do recognize the problem.

¹⁸ This refers to the 30% gender quota that exists in Liberia for listings of candidates in elections.



2b. % Of participating local authorities and traditional leaders who report improved perceptions and increased commitment to women participation and leadership.

100% of enablers and blockers (9 out of 9) interviewed indicate that they (themselves) have changed their perceptions on women participation on leadership, sharpening their views, or giving them new insights. When asked to give examples to illustrate their commitment to women leadership, the following examples stood out:

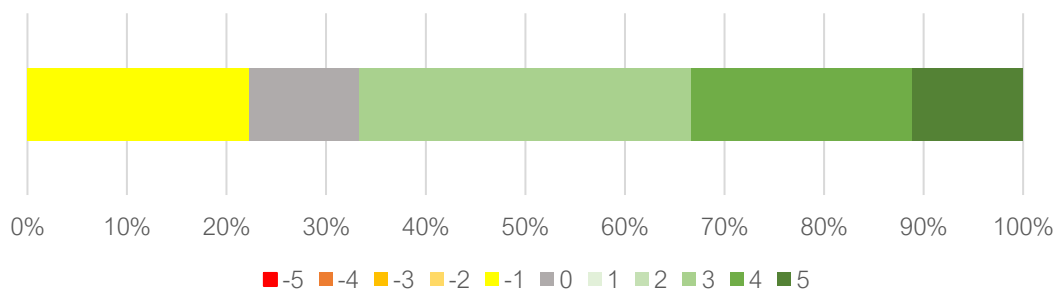
“It has been like that before, I think women can make the head wave. I have learned to embrace the leadership of women like quarter chief or other positions.” (Blocker, Bong County)

“Through the program we have recruited more women in leadership like the public relations officer. We have also created an open forum to embrace the suggestion from women.” (Enabler, Montserrado County)

“For instance, in Suakoko, district women have never served in any key position but with the push of the agenda to the Superintendent we have a woman as paramount chief. It is easy for female to penetrate any area as compared to men. Therefore, for we are pushing for this representation.” (Enabler, Bong County)

It must however be noted that challenges do remain. When respondents were asked whether local authorities and traditional leaders (other than themselves) have become more accepting of female representatives in political and civic life, their answers revealed a different reality. Although most respondents do think that there is a wider acceptance of women in leadership roles, others indicate that this is not the case. For example, at the traditional level women are still being intimidated, and women are still being denied access to key positions in some places.

Do you think that local authorities and traditional leaders have become more accepting of female representatives in political and civic life?



2c. # of locally led solutions which are agreed upon by women's groups and actors, gain written commitment and are implemented

All of the enablers and blockers interviewed (100%) were able to mention and elaborate on some of the key structural barriers for women participation in their community. The barriers that were most frequently mentioned include the following:

- Fear of violating or deviating from traditional societal norms.
- Men feel and act superior to women, creating a barrier for female participation.
- Female leaders have more difficulty gaining respect from citizens and colleagues.
- Women are economically marginalized, making their participation more difficult.
- Fear and shame of speaking up.
- Lack of confidence to act as equal to men in community meetings.
- People (men) from older generations consider their positions in the community as a lifetime property.

Respondents were also asked if they knew of any ideas that gained written commitment from the authorities. The 9 enablers and blockers mentioned **three** written commitments (see text box). Furthermore, 6 locally led solutions have been captured by ZOA and ABIC throughout the project (Annex A), alongside many (informal) promises by community leaders to include more women in leadership positions and to include them in decision-making processes.

In terms of appointments of women, 39 women have been appointed into leadership positions, including 1 town chief, 4 assistant town chiefs, 7 quarter chiefs, 9 assistant quarter chiefs, 3 block leaders, 4 members of boards of the elders, and 11 various other positions including development chair, community watch leader, or zonal head.

Women and youth participants were also asked if the project involved local authorities and traditional leaders in finding solutions for women's civic and political participation. Among the positive answers, examples of outcomes from the stakeholder meetings include the following:

- Women are now investigating committees
- Women are attending meetings with authorities
- Women can now run for government position
- Women are going on radio talk to advocate for women
- Women are taking position in churches
- Women are making recommendations to government
- Women are working with towns chief to improve women participation
- Women are carrying on peace awareness
- Women are handling women cases

Written Commitments

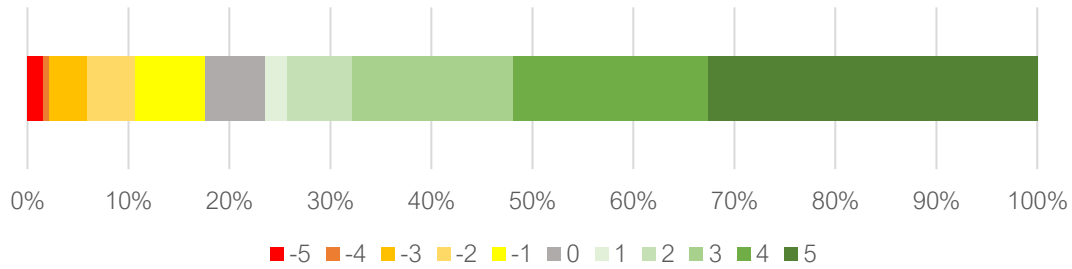
In **Gbelekpelai** (Bong), it is being listed that women will always have the chance to have representations in all major areas in the community leadership.

In **Chocolate City** (Montserrado), the position of 3rd vice chair for women and children is being spelled out in the community constitution. The co-chair on the Elders council position is also allotted to a woman.

In **King Grey** (Montserrado), the leadership is officially open to everyone regardless of gender.



Has the project involved local authorities and traditional leaders in finding solutions for women’s civic and political participation?



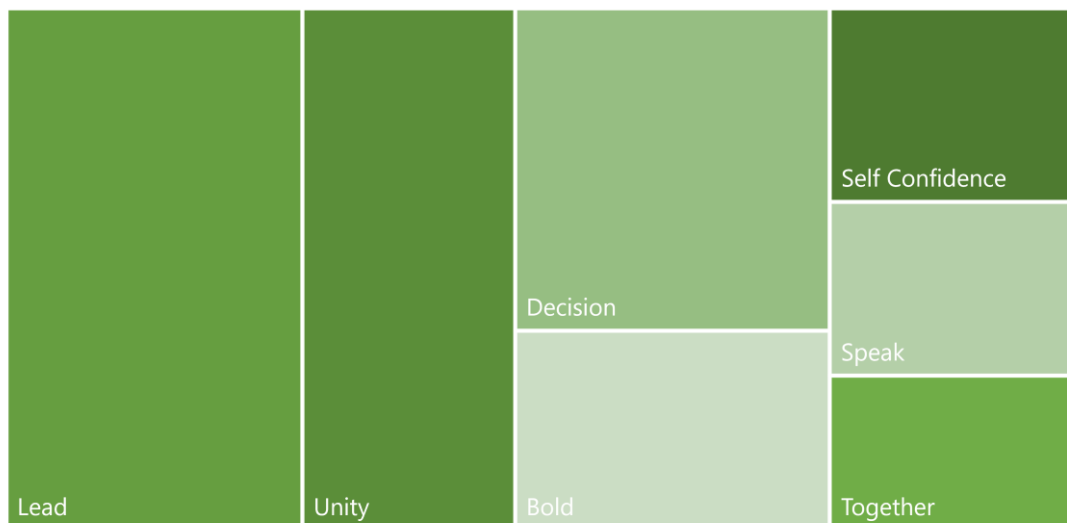
2d. % of participants in the appreciative inquiry visits who report increased confidence, knowledge, and skills to represent women’s issues, demands and aspirations.

100% of the women and youth who participated in the AI sessions agrees that the project contributed to improving the leadership abilities of women. When asked what type of knowledge and skills they gained, the following keywords were mentioned most often. When asked about the quality of the organization of the AI sessions, all participants answered positively, with the vast majority (94%) evaluating the AI sessions as +4 or +5 (on a +5 to +5 scale). When asked what the most important achievements of the AI sessions were, participants mentioned the following:

- I now know my values as a woman
- It helped me discover who I am
- Leaving the attitude of not being shame to speak
- Speaking out in the society
- I can sell small market to generate income
- The AI sessions taught me to be bold

A keyword analysis of participants’ answers shows that the following words were used most frequently to describe how people increased their confidence and skills:

Achievements of AI - Keyword Analysis



4. OECD DAC Guidelines for Effective Evaluations

This section gives a holistic overview of the project, in line with the OECD-DAC guidelines for effective evaluations. The sections of the evaluation include the project's relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. In line with a request from the project partners, the evaluators have paid special attention to the project's flexibility, interaction between the methodologies, reinforcing results, gender equity, women empowerment, the capacity of CSOs, and innovation.

Relevance – Is the intervention doing the right things?

The project addresses several needs of Liberia as a country, as well as those of women, youth, authorities, and traditional leaders in the counties of Montserrado and Bong.

Women in Liberia remain a marginalized group at all levels in society. Traditional norms tend to confine women to family and domestic duties in the private sphere, whereas men are breadwinners and control decision-making. These socio-economic disparities translate to unequal access to income, education, justice, and political participation, among others. According to World Bank data, literacy rates among women aged +15 (34%) are lower than those of men (63%). Similarly, women and girls aged spend 6.7% of their time on unpaid care and domestic work, compared to 2.6% spent by men, and are more likely to be in 'vulnerable employment' (91% vs. 65% for men).¹⁹ Women in Liberia are also less likely to have a bank account (28% vs. 44%) or to own a house alone (7% vs. 16%).²⁰

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The Liberian government has made efforts to increase the representation of women in leadership positions, both at the national and the local level. Despite a 2014 amendment to the election law stipulating that political parties and coalitions "should endeavor to ensure" that at least 30 percent of their candidates represent each gender, the proportion of women in the national parliament (13% in 2020) and in managerial positions (20%) is still very low. Similarly, at the local level only 8% of paramount chiefs and town chiefs are women, and only 6% of other local government positions (mayors, quarter chiefs) are women.²¹

Gender inequity in Liberia also translates into (electoral) violence against women. In 2018, 26.9% of women aged 15-49 years reported that they had been subject to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months.²² Violence against women in elections is also longstanding challenge in Liberia. According to the National Democratic Institute, the 2017 presidential elections were paired with physical violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, threats and coercion, and economic violence against women.²³ At the local level, women who present themselves as political candidates face similar incidents of violence and intimidation.

The project intervention also addresses some of the specific needs in the counties of Montserrado and Bong. With a population of 1.1 million and being home to the capital city of Monrovia, Montserrado is a hotspot for public protests and gender-based violence. It is also the

¹⁹ According to the World Bank's definition, workers in vulnerable employment are the least likely to have formal work arrangements, social protection, and safety nets to guard against economic shocks

²⁰ World Bank Gender Data Portal, The World Bank, 2022 ([LINK](#))

²¹ Idem

²² UN Women Data Hub, 2021 ([LINK](#))

²³ National Democratic Institute, n.d. ([LINK](#))



home of several women's organizations, including Angie Brooks International Center, the Women's NGO secretariate of Liberia, the Young Women's Christian Organization, and several international NGOs and institutions that focus on gender issues. The city of Monrovia has a successful history of female city mayors, including Orphelia Hoff (2001-2009) Mary Broh (2009-2012), and Clara Doe-Mvogo (2014-2018). In the case of Bong County, the county has a history of electoral disputes involving female leaders, but also a high level of support for gender equality.²⁴ The current superintendent for Bong County, Esther Walker, is actively involved in peacebuilding and reconciliation mechanisms.

At the level of the women and youth involved in the project, the interventions of the WSR mechanism and Appreciative Inquiry are highly relevant in addressing their needs. The WSR mechanism addresses an explicit need for mediation and conflict resolution in and around electoral stages. Women Mediators can play an important role in peacebuilding because they are perceived as impartial and accessible by both citizens, authorities, and political actors. Women's participation in peacebuilding has also proven to be effective. Higher levels of gender equity are associated with lower propensity for conflict, both within and between states.²⁵ Additionally, the AI sessions can help to empower women to speak up for their rights and to be more prominent in the political process.

Finally, although many of the blockers involved in the AI sessions did not initially see the intervention as addressing their needs, many authorities involved in the project have come to accept that women participation and leadership is a win-win endeavor. For example, several stakeholders mentioned that having women in leadership positions is a relief for male authorities. Male town chiefs and traditional leaders now feel more confident 'outsourcing' some of the conflict-resolution issues that involve women, giving them more time to focus on other tasks.

Coherence – How well does the intervention fit?

For all project stakeholders, there is sufficient **internal coherence** between the project intervention and other projects carried out by the organizations.

For UNPBF, the intervention is in line with its wider peacebuilding strategy in Liberia, which has been active since 2007 and which focuses on three priority areas: (1) Fostering National Reconciliation and Conflict Management, (2) Critical Interventions to Promote Peace, and (3) Strengthening State Capacity for Peace Consolidation as well as with the other projects and organizations that are supported.²⁶ In 2020, 40% of UNPBF investments were dedicated to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

For Angie Brooks International Center, the intervention of the WSR mechanism forms part of the organization's core activities. ABIC has been involved with WSR trainings since its establishment in 2009. Since then, the WSR mechanism has spread to various other countries in Africa. During the 2017 elections, the WSR was active in all of Liberia's electoral districts, providing 300 elections observers and 73 peace monitors and detecting and / or intervening in approximately 800 incidents.

For ZOA, the intervention fits neatly under its peacebuilding branch activities, which have been supporting Liberia since 2018. Specifically, the intervention builds on ZOA's projects in community-based sociotherapy, which shows some overlap with the Appreciative Inquiry methodology, which was developed by ZOA in 2019 and implemented under Irish Aid funding. At

²⁴ Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD), 2021. ([LINK](#))

²⁵ Council for Foreign Relations. "Women's Participation in Peace Processes". ([LINK](#))

²⁶ United Nations MPTF Office ([LINK](#))



the local level, ZOA's peacebuilding interventions have also supported County Security Councils and County Peace Committees.

For the four civil society organizations involved in implementing the Appreciative Inquiry sessions, the intervention fits their core vision and activities as women's organizations, while simultaneously serving as an opportunity for capacity building. YWCA, Liberia National Rural Women Structure, Impact Girls, and Bong County Women Organization all have relevant experiences in women empowerment. Apart from teaching the AI methodology to women, youth, and authorities in their counties, the women working at the CSOs also felt empowered themselves to take more responsibility and to take up leadership positions in their own communities or households.

In terms of external coherence, the intervention fits well within several existing global, regional, and national frameworks that aim at women and security.

At the global level, the intervention is well in line with the UN agenda on Women Peace and Security pursuant UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). With respect to the UN sustainable development goals, the project contributes to goals 5 (Gender Equality), 10 (Reduced Inequality), and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions). Specifically, the intervention is relevant to the following targets and indicators:

- 5.5. Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life.
- 10.2. By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.
- 16.7. Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory, and representative decision-making at all levels.

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At the continental level, the intervention falls under the umbrella of the African Union's Agenda 2063 ambitions, specifically goals 17 (full gender equality in all spheres of life), 18 (engaged and empowered youth and children), and 11 (Capable institutions and transformative leadership in place). Additionally, the WSR model is also in line with the AU's African Peace and Security Structure, which hosts activities such as the panel of the wise, FemWise Africa, and a continental Early Warning system, including a situation room.²⁷ The African Union has also adopted the WSR model as a best-practice model for other countries.

Several of the AU's institutional structures are also replicated at the regional level by the ECOWAS Peace and Security Architecture and Operations. For example, ECOWAS aims to strengthen national early warning and response capacities (including mediation), as well as to strengthen the role of women in peace and security.²⁸ At the non-state level, the Women in Peace Network (WIPNET) is an important partner. WIPNET seeks to increase the number of trained women practitioners in peacebuilding as trainers, researchers, mediators, and advocates.

At the national level, the project is aligned with the Liberian government's 'Pro Poor Agenda for Development and Prosperity' (PAPD), which is part of Liberia's Vision 2030 framework.²⁹ Specifically, they contribute to pillars 3 (sustaining the peace) and 4 (governance and transparency). In terms of implementation, the Liberia Peace Building Office (PBO), was the appropriate institution to serve as a third-party monitor because of their position between the Liberian government and local peacebuilding infrastructures.

²⁷ African Union, n.d. [\(LINK\)](#)

²⁸ The European External Action Service (EEAS), 2019 [\(LINK\)](#)

²⁹ Ministry Of Finance And Development Planning Liberia, 2018. [\(LINK\)](#)



Effectiveness – Is the Intervention Achieving its Objectives?

The project has successfully achieved all its objectives and outcomes mentioned in the results-based framework.

The project's overall objective to promote women's leadership and participation in civic and political life and their role conflict prevention and resolution has been fully achieved. Almost all women interviewed for the final evaluation report to have gained leadership abilities (100%) and available opportunities (99%) in civil and political life. Similarly, **98%** believes that the project has increased women's **participation** in mediation spaces, and **99%** of WSR participants agree that the project has contributed to more **effective mediations** taking place in the WSR. All Eminent Women and local authorities interviewed (100%) also agree that women's leadership capabilities have improved, and that the project helped in increasing women's opportunities in politics, civic functions, and mediation activities.

In terms of appointments of women, 39 women have been appointed into leadership positions, including 1 town chief, 4 assistant town chiefs, 7 quarter chiefs, 9 assistant quarter chiefs, 3 block leaders, 4 members of boards of the elders, and 11 various other positions including development chair, community watch leader, or zonal head.

However, respondents also identified several remaining obstacles to women representation and participation. For example, while women are more represented in advocacy and peacebuilding activities, their representation in politics is more limited. Similarly, while many women in the project have achieved positions as a (assistant) block leader, secretary, or assistant town chief, it is still hard for them to achieve positions such as town chief or county-level authorities.

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In terms of the project indicators related to outcomes 1 and 2, the intervention also achieved all targets. With respect to outcome 1, all women and youth interviewed (100%) report (an increase in) sense of agency and civic responsibility. 97% of political actors, citizens and other relevant stakeholders acknowledge the key role of women in conflict resolution and peaceful co-existence. Finally, 86% of citizens interviewed reported co-existence and peaceful conflict resolution in the aftermath of the elections.

With respect to outcome 2, 89% of enablers and blockers interviewed accept there is a problem of under representation of women in political and civic life, and 100% indicate that they (themselves) have changed their perceptions on women participation on leadership. All enablers and blockers were also able to mention and elaborate on some of the key structural barriers for women participation in their community, including fear and shame to deviate from traditional norms, feelings or male superiority and entrenched interests, socio-economic marginalization, and a lack of confidence among women. Finally, all participants of the AI sessions indicated that the intervention contributed to improving their knowledge, skills, and confidence.

Challenges do however remain. 33% of respondents indicated that authorities and traditional leaders (other than themselves) have not become more accepting of female representatives in political and civic life. For example, at the traditional level women are still being intimidated, and women are still being denied access to key positions in some places. It must also be noted that only 10% of citizens report to have heard about the WSR mechanism. This indicates that much work remains in terms of increasing awareness of the WSR in the run-up to the 2023 elections.



The success of the project can be attributed to four major **success factors**: Methodology, Persistence, Inclusion of men, and Adaptability.

The methodologies of the Women's Situation Room mechanism and the Appreciative Inquiry sessions are both recognized as success-methods. Participants of the WSR trainings mentioned achievements in terms of their awareness on peacebuilding, but also in terms of their skills and empowerment in terms of conflict resolution and mediation. Similarly, participants of the AI sessions hailed the innovative methods to foment fearlessness and togetherness, as well as teaching women and youth to communicate better to breach traditional societal norms.

The persistence of the project intervention was recognized as another important success factor. Especially in the Appreciative Inquiry sessions, it is important to continually engage with women and male counterparts to change their perspective on gender issues. The average of 8.7 AI sessions helped many participants go through the stages of Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny. As one stakeholder put it in the KI interview: "persistence kills resistance".

A third success factor for the project is the adaptability of the interventions. This is especially the case for the AI sessions, which were carried out by four different CSOs in 20 different communities. Depending on the discoveries and dreams of participants, the AI methodology allowed for different designs of the future, enhancing the project's flexibility.

Finally, the inclusion of male counterparts in the AI sessions was recognized as an important success factor. Having the buy-in of men, both at the community level and at the household level, is important to facilitate the empowerment and participation of women. For example, some of the authorities changed their perspective on female leadership as something that is beneficial to their own positions, as it relieves them of some of the stress that comes with their responsibilities, and because they realize that women are often better positioned to deal with women's issues.

Apart from intended effects of the project, the intervention also led to several (positive) unintended effects. For example, women groups from several communities decided to add savings schemes to their institutions, allowing members to start or expand small businesses. At YWCA, some of the women involved in the implementation of the project mentioned that the AI sessions had also empowered them personally, for example to take on the leadership of a parent-teacher organization at a local school. Finally, the project has also incentivized neighboring communities to inquire about WSR training and AI sessions. This may provide the project partners with an opportunity to expand the project towards the 2023 elections.

Efficiency – How well are resources being used?

In terms of money, time, and human resources used, the intervention is efficient overall, although some inefficiencies are worth mentioning. All stakeholders indicated that project funds were disbursed efficiently to the implementing partners. ZOA was explicitly commended on its efficient management of the project, and meeting deadlines.

The training of local CSOs to implement the AI sessions is both cost-effective and sustainable, especially when taking into consideration that ZOA is phasing out of Liberia. Although the quality and timing of implementation was not equal for all the CSOs, overall, they managed to fulfil their obligations. Participants were not paid to participate in the WSR and AI activities, which was a commendable decision.



The Liberia Peacebuilding Office did not frequently send senior management to visit the field. They did 3 out of the 5 quarterly visits. As a result, their involvement in the project as an external monitor was somewhat hampered.

ABIC's implementation of the WSR mechanism was efficient thanks to their substantial experience in Liberia. ABIC has an experienced team of trainers and Eminent Women, in which each knows their responsibilities. In terms of planning and reporting, however, ABIC was somewhat behind schedule. Some of the WSR training rounds took place late, and women mediators did not receive certification. During the final evaluation, the research team did not receive all project documentation and support for mobilization in a timely manner. This complicated the efficient gathering of data.

Finally, ZOA's management of the final evaluation was also complicated because of human resource issues. By the time the final evaluation started, several project staff had already left the organization, making it difficult to gather data efficiently.

Impact – What difference does the intervention make?

There has been a structural human impact on people's lives due to the intervention. One stakeholder highlighted that normally, men would not open up to women, but now women are increasingly accepted as equal counterparts to men, both in the household and at the community level. Also, women didn't know their talents and felt like the men should always be in the front, but with the AI sessions they understood their inherent strengths and rights. YWCA mentioned how the AI method did well for women because it changed the mentality of women not knowing their talents and feeling like men should always be in the front.

The intervention also has higher-level effects on Liberian society. The participants contribute to slowly changing norms within society. Thanks to the successes of ABIC and many of the Eminent Women who have held positions of power in the past, Liberia has put itself on the map as a feminist country in West Africa.³⁰ Higher appointed citizens are making references to encourage women as leaders in society, and some male senators, superintendents, and other authorities use the inclusion of women as a 'selling point' in the public debate.

Perhaps the best illustration of this is President's Weah's speech at the 2022 United Nations General Assembly 77th session, in which he prided himself as Liberia's 'Feminist-in-Chief', explicitly mentioning that 'women empowerment and the promotion of gender equality remain key priorities of the Government'. Some might dismiss this as window dressing, but as the AI methodology has taught us, words matter.

A point of critique in terms of the project's effectiveness regards the interaction between the WSR and the AI methods. Although the two methodologies are clearly complementary to each other on paper, in practice the project was carried out as two simultaneous interventions in separate communities and with separate beneficiaries. Although there was some overlap in the selection of the project communities, there seemed to be no interaction between the methods or the project partners. This is unfortunate, because the WSR and AI interventions can clearly reinforce each other. WSR members need pro-active and empowered women to bring conflict issues to their mechanism, and empowered women need to be aware of the WSR mechanism and its functions.

³⁰ PeaceWomen, 2015. ([LINK](#))

Sustainability – Will the benefits last?

Feminist waves across the world have shown that gender equity and empowerment of women is driven by incremental changes. The WSR and AI sessions contribute to this wave by changing the beliefs and skills of women and youth in Montserrado and Bong, as well as their participation. Given that the project outcomes benefit both women and their male counterparts, the benefits of the project are likely to last.

Nevertheless, the progress achieved should not be taken for granted. There is a real risk that the gains in terms of empowerment and acceptance of female participation and leadership disappear over time. Across Liberia, traditional societal norms persist in many places, and women remain stigmatized, socio-economically disadvantaged, and targets of structural violence. 10 sessions of WSR training or AI in 40 communities in two counties is a drop in the ocean in that sense.

The most obvious threat to the benefits gained during the project is obviously the 2023 elections. After three largely free, fair, and peaceful presidential elections in 2005, 2011, and 2017, the elections of October 2023 are a crucial test for Liberia's democratic consolidation. Due to the termination of the UNMIL in 2018, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the volatile economic situation of Liberia during the past five years, a peaceful election is not guaranteed.

ABIC already has support for the continuation of its activities in 2023. Given the fact that ZOA's mission in Liberia ends in 2022, it is pertinent that the local CSOs find an alternative source of funding to continue supporting beneficiaries. Although the peacefulness of the 2023 does not depend on (solely) on women, for the sake of this evaluation it is pertinent that the support for ABIC, the WSR mechanism, CSOs, and the AI methodology is sustained at least throughout 2023. After all, persistence breaks resistance.



Annex

Attached to this report you will a zip-file with the following annexes (for project stakeholders only).

Annex A – Desk Research
Annex B – Research Tools
Annex C - Datasets

Thank you for reading this report. If you have any comments or questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at liberiamonitors@gmail.com

