



Liberians Speak Out

Results from 14 Focus Groups
On Behalf of National Democratic Institute

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Methodology



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Methodology

National Democratic Institute - Liberia contracted with the Center for Justice and Peace Studies (CJPS) to manage the field work and provide moderators for 14 focus groups conducted in six Liberian counties. The focus groups were conducted between 11 and 23 November, 2013

NDI staff, with input from CJPS and Christine Quirk of Quirk Global Strategies, designed the research and travel schedule, including the composition, location and schedule of the focus groups.

The purpose of the research was twofold: To assist NDI's civil society partners in identifying issues in their areas of activity that resonate with Liberians and to explore ways to increase activism on these issues.

Representatives from NDI civil society partners WASH, NRM and SEWODA met with NDI staff and Christine Quirk in NDI's Monrovia office on 6 and 7 November for a briefing on the goals of the research, qualitative methods and a brainstorming session to assist in the development of the discussion guide. Christine Quirk designed and wrote the guide, with final input and editing by NDI staff. The guide was further refined and tested during the moderators' training in Gbarnga on 9 and 10 November.

Christine Quirk conducted a two-day training of CJPS moderators in Gbarnga on 9 and 10 November. Ten moderators and CJPS staff participated in the training, which included an introduction to qualitative methods, moderating skills, a thorough breakdown of the guide emphasizing comprehension and clarity and a practice group with female participants recruited from Gbarnga. Six trained moderators (three female and three male) traveled to all the counties and conducted 14 groups under supervision by Christine Quirk and NDI staff.

Seven focus groups were made up of men and seven were made up of women. Seven were made up of Liberians under age 35 and seven of those over 35. CJPS field staff was instructed to use a modified snowball recruiting method to reduce the chances of recruiting known activists or CJPS colleagues. Outside of Monrovia, participants with more than a high school education were excluded, with an aim for a mix of less- and better-educated participants. The two groups in Monrovia were made up of men and women with some college or more.

Two groups each were conducted in: Ganta, Nimba County; Voinjama, Lofa County; Zwedru, Grand Gedeh County; Barclayville, Grand Kru County; urban Montserrado County (Monrovia); rural Montserrado County (Todee) and Gbarpolu, Gbarpolu County. Christine Quirk, Thomas Du and Nannoh Seekey observed groups in Nimba, Lofa, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru Counties and Monrovia, while Thomas Du and Nannoh Seekey observed additional groups in rural Montserrado and Gbarpolu counties.

NDI's Civil Society Partners

Liberia CSOs WASH Network: In 2009 six Liberian CSOs created a network called the Liberian CSOs WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene). The objective of the network is to mobilize civil society and citizens to engage public officials to improve access to water, sanitation and hygiene. The most active CSOs in the WASH Network are the Citizens United to Promote Peace and Democracy in Liberia (CUPPADL), the Liberia NGO Network (LINNK), WASH Reporters and Editors Network (WASH R&E) and the Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL).

CSO Consortium on Natural Resource Management (NRM): The consortium consists of members that are working across Liberia on natural resource governance issues at the county and sub-national levels. The CSOs are involved in strategic initiatives involving conflict resolution, research and policy advocacy, community mobilization and environmental protection advocacy, particularly governance and management of natural resources.

South East Women Development Association (SEWODA): SEWODA is a local NGO that engages in advocacy, education/training, agriculture, peace building, community development and health related programs. SEWODA works with women in South Eastern Liberia to raise their awareness of human rights and increase women's participation in peace-building at the governmental and civil society level. It works primarily in Grand Kru, River Gee, Maryland, Sinoe and Grand Gedeh Counties.

Focus Group Locations



Issue Landscape



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Issue Landscape

- Liberia has made tremendous progress, according to most participants, and most are upbeat about the direction the country is headed. They praise its peace and stability and the advances made in assuring freedom of speech, access to justice and education.
- Improved access to education – from primary schools to women to illiterate adults – is by far the government’s biggest accomplishment and is the topic of repeated accolades throughout the country. However, it is also a significant weakness. Liberians demand more: better pay for teachers, more scholarships, fewer fees and more vocational schools/higher education.
- Participants are proud of Liberia’s progress on peace and stability, but some fear conflict could arise from a number of different causes, ranging from increasing prices, to corruption and nepotism to land disputes. Conflict over natural resources was not a top of mind concern.
- Poor roads are a problem common to all counties. Bad roads affect every aspect of life – traveling, communicating, transporting patients, cost of living, moving goods to market and access to educational opportunities. Many participants see the country’s poor roads as the primary barrier to development.
- Rising prices are also a frequent complaint around the country. The increasing exchange rate with the USD causes the price of staples like rice to rise, placing a heavy burden on most people. Prices are also driven up by high transport costs.
- Women in Monrovia and Zwedru, in particular, worry about drugs and crime, especially among young people.

Issue Landscape, Cont'd

- Youth complain about a lack of opportunity – economic, social and educational. High school graduates lament the lack of or cost of higher education and scarce vocational training opportunities.
- Each county reports some problems specific to its region, but roads, education and health care issues are common to all. Sanitation and water are also frequently mentioned. Cronyism and nepotism are particular problems in Grand Kru, while some Nimba residents mentioned land use disputes.

Participants Praise the Progress Liberia Has Made in Assuring Basic Rights, Peace and Stability and Improving Access to Education

What's going right in Liberia right now?

This peace process is very, very courageous, and we are very thankful to the Almighty Allah that such a thing is happening without any problem.
Nimba County male

Well I'm happy because we are not running; we are not hiding. We are not going from place to place again. Monrovia female

That women are now educated and also peace. In Liberia we are now living peacefully. Lofa County female

He made mention of the education system, before then, when this county was declared as county, in 1964, there was no higher learning institution here, but presently we have the Zwedru Community College, where majority of us, the young people, are making use of it.
Grand Gedeh male

The education system in the country is improved; before then the children just used to be wasting. Now they make every child to go to school.
Nimba County female

Female education is to the top. We are learning, we are not scared to go to school, school is our main priority. This time we can speak out, so there are many good things that are happening in this country that we really appreciate, especially on the line of education.
Grand Kru County female

Immediately after war, there was no justice system. Anybody can harm you and nothing will come about it. But now we have a justice system when somebody do harm to you, there is authority gathered over us, go to court, sue somebody when you win the justice, and then maybe the person will get into jail and you will be set free. Before it never used to happen. Grand Gedeh female

Yes the good thing I see is freedom of speech today. In the past government nobody could stand to say anything in public but now people can say whatever they like to say and nobody can harm or do anything to them you can say anything at anytime any hour you feel. Gbarpolu County male

Education Is Both the Government's Biggest Accomplishment and Its Biggest Shortcoming

Liberians Praise the Government for Progress Made But Demand More

Positive

The good thing that I see going on in Liberia is education. Education is all over Liberia now; all in the villages our children are going to school and it was not happening like that before. Rural Montserrado County female

Like the old-ma said, the education setting is improving. Now everybody wants to go to school; old, young, you come here in the night you will see the older ones, younger even the ones with children they want to go to school because nobody wants to be left behind. Rural Montserrado County female

Because a few years back, most of us were not in school due to the war. All in the bush, some in exile but now, we're seeing education is accessible to everybody for those who want to learn. Because you see that the government has introduced free education, even though it may not be totally free. But at least thank God we are free, we can go to school, like most of us we've gone to the level that we were not before. Nimba County male

We have many schools in the various interior places. Like the villages where you know people have more than 20 houses. They have schools there. Each village has its school. Grand Gedeh County male

Some of the good things that happening in Liberia now, our children are going to school free. Free education is in Liberia now. Grand Kru County female

The good thing I see happening is that God helped us, the old people are going to school. Even if they don't know how to read and write well, but at least they know their left and right that somebody will give them paper. I am happy of that, and I am happy of the government schools. Monrovia female

Negative

When it comes to the education system in Liberia, there are so many bad things that can happen. For example in Gbarpolu here most of the teachers are not on payroll so they are not putting more time in school with the students. This is not good. The ministry needs to do something about this. Gbarpolu County male

Is about the payment of teachers. Our teachers are not paid on time, a man works for like four years and he not taking pay. Just imagine this is very bad for our education system. Gbarpolu County male

The children that are going to school, the way they used to give scholarships to children, they're not doing it now. So those who do not get money can be sitting down because there's no money for them to go to school. Nimba County female

Yes the thing that's going on that not good now is what my sister said here just now. If you don't have money, your child will not go to school. Like this their private school, your child can be in school and you have to pay fifteen or twenty thousand, and not everybody is working. We don't have money. Grand Gedeh County female

In the government school, they said the children are going to school for free, but after one or two years again people begin to pay small, small money, register the children and then pay tuition. Grand Gedeh County female

The building, structures are there, but some of these towns where the school starts from ABC to 6th grade level, you only have one instructor. That is that one instructor when he or she in 4th grade class, the rest of the classes will be abandoned and children will just be moving here and there. Grand Gedeh County male

The main problem I face is education. The schools don't have materials to teach. We don't have a library in the school, no books. When they give us assignment to do, how we can we do it because we have no books? Rural Montserrado County male

Liberia's Stability is Praised, but Some Participants Fear Conflict Could Arise from an Array of Different Causes

Yes for me I am worried [about conflict], because of our brother that's living in the bush digging gold and diamonds. I find out that the government is not overseeing them, seeing how the diamonds have been bought. They are not going to school, so we will find out that in the next four to five years from now, if those people don't go back to school, we will have problems or problems will come. Gbarpolu County female

We worry because the economic status like for you now you are from town the US rate is high in town now, you know how the bag of rice price has gone up. I think it brought war before, so all these things can bring problems. Rural Montserrado County female

The price of a bag of rice is high and I got plenty of children to feed. It's not easy, if I see a group of people saying we going to that government there to bring rice price down, I will join them to go and it may bring conflict. Rural Montserrado County female

We are afraid even though we not praying that such thing could not happen. Due to nepotism, where the case that we got certain group of people enjoying, then you got certain group of people suffering. From that point something may happen because a group of people can't continue to suffer while certain people enjoy. Some people may feel disenchanted. Monrovia male

We can say yes and no to this question. This is because every day, there is a problem and indeed a new problem. For example, we got the news recently that formal soldiers of the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) are out for another trick. They are requesting back pay and making threats at the same time. So we don't know what will happen if they do not get their pay. We are worried because they are ex-soldiers. We are also worried because the United Nations soldiers will leave and the country will be left to us to run. Are we prepared for this? Do we have the security to run the country? There are also lots of criticism about the government is this, the government is that. This is really worrying to some of us. Monrovia male

It is true that conflict will be here. Because when 1990 was coming, 89, prices were going up. Now the U.S. rate is 82. And not everybody got people in America, everybody is not working. All the people you seeing here are high school graduate, colleges graduates but they can't work. Even the Putu Mountain, they take people from Monrovia. Then what we the citizens what we will do now, we must wash bathrooms? Even though in all counties not everybody is educated but we have people that learn. So we the Grand Gedehans really, we are facing problems. Grand Gedeh female

There is a parable that a hungry man is an angry man. Reason is that they up there, they only satisfy themselves and don't have time for those that are down. If you are up there, you are eating, you get to show your hands down to the person that under you to survive from your sweat. Grand Gedeh male

The reason I have that fear is that over the past weeks I've been hearing that people received money for resettlement to leave other people's land and some of those people are still reluctant to leave the land. We need the president, the government and other organizations to come in peacefully. People who received this money, who accepted to leave this land that received this money should please turn this land over to the government. If the government doesn't turn the land over to the owner, then is left with the government and the owner. Nimba County male

Bad Roads Are a Common Complaint and Affect Daily Life in Many Ways

Bad Roads Inhibit Education, Travel, Health Care and Cause Prices to Rise

If you want to open the road to development, you have to have a road network. Okay, we understand that we have free and compulsory education system working now in Liberia. But how can we implement that with no road network? We have schools in the rural area. We have Grand Gedeh Community College, but where in there is no support, everything is circulating around Monrovia alone, how can we get communication from the people up there? You understand? Grand Gedeh County male

We had a road network here. The road that is linking up to the capital city Monrovia. When we get in the rainy season, it is cut off. People in the southeast are cut from the people in the city part. How can we communicate with each other about education? Our teachers pay are not coming on time. Doctors are working. How can we carry a patient to Tappita where we having a referrer hospital? Tell me. So the road network is the problem that we facing right now. Grand Gedeh County male

The road problem. To travel from here Monrovia you can face difficulties; the road is very bad. Lofa County female

One bad thing I'm looking at, things at the market are so expensive. Because of the bad road conditions, people get their foodstuffs in those villages but how to transport them? If they try to use motorbike to bring them, they are so expensive. Because the motorbike charges are expensive, so yourself will sell your goods or maybe your food stuffs expensive. Grand Gedeh County female

Some of the main problems we are facing in Liberia is the road problem. If we don't have good roads, everything is expensive, everything that we can't get, all the corruption. Since we cannot get a good road, places like Barclayville that have no road, nothing good can come here that will benefit us. Grand Kru County female

One of the problems that Liberia faces now is the road network. Before a car can pass then you need to get more than 25 manpower to push the car or you need a UNMIL Jack-Truck that can pull your car from one hole to another hole before you can cross. Liberia needs to have a very good road system. You can go to Ivory Coast or other countries and you can see their road is paved, and so you can see so many investors going all over. But if you want to come to Grand Kru, you will have to be thinking about the distance. You will need 3 – 4 days before you can come to yourself. There are other materials that are supposed to come to the County but because of the road, there's no way. So this is why the County is not moving forward because there is no road network. So government needs to do something about it! Grand Kru County male

One of the main things in this country is the road network. In Monrovia itself because of the road condition the traffic is jamming every day. Redlight for an example is one of the commercial areas; that place is overcrowded. The road there is not good and it is a gateway to Monrovia. So the road network is one of the problems in this country, is one of the main things we really need to look at. Rural Montserrado county male

Rising Prices Are a Big Concern in Every County, Particularly as they Are Affected by the Exchange Rate

The main thing facing Liberia is the food. When you've got two or three children in the house, to feed them is not easy. First our own day bag of rice, we only used to buy if for \$25.00. But this time the bag of rice you buy it, it can't stay long in the house. When you go in the market they will tell you L\$30.00 for rice and if you have seven to eight children it can't last long. That one is giving us hard time. Nimba County female

The economic rate is getting high in Liberia. They system here in Liberia is hard to get money, the US price is going high up so for people to get money to do things for themselves is very hard. Lofa County female

The main things we are facing in Zwedru here is the U.S. rate. The U.S. rate is too high. So when it comes to that, all the prices on the market are too high. Grand Gedeh male

For me the main problem we facing in Liberia are the currency. The US rate wants to overtake the Liberian currency so it making things very difficult for us. Grand Kru County female

For me, in this country; there are no stable prices. People feel when they go in the market whether bag of rice is supposed to be 25.00 dollars, but the way they buy it and what they pay they want to get everything according to the way they buy if including the transportation they pay, so no stable prices. Grand Kru County male

The rice price in this country is very high, everything's price has gone up high. The US exchange rate gone up high. The only thing that the Old Ma doing, she said she can't control price. It's very bad in this country. Monrovia female

Some of the things that are affecting us is our husbands are working and they aren't being paid. How do they expect us to feed ourselves? Even our children how do they expect us to buy things for them with Christmas coming? Rural Montserrado female

The U.S. rate has gone up and just as the U.S. rate climbs, that's how the prices of things will go up. Gbarpolu County female

Women, Particularly in Monrovia and Zwedru, Are Concerned about Crime and Drugs

I am downhearted about the drugs – little children taking the drugs. The children go to school then they go with their friends to take drugs. Monrovia female

This drug business is spoiling the children. Your own child nowadays, you're talking to the child, they want to abuse you, that this drug business. If the government can look into it to help us, we will be happy. Right behind old Defense here, that's their base. We can't sleep; they don't give us chance – you lay something outside before you go in and come back outside it's gone. Monrovia female

The criminal attitude, I say we are dying here. The drugs, we are living among the drug people and also the people who live here. Monrovia female

And the youths in my community, both boys and girls, the first thing they take for breakfast in the morning is drugs and in the afternoons. Sometimes they go as far as stabbing and he has to see the intestine of his blood brother on the ground before he is satisfied. Monrovia female

We are in the rural area so we will talk on the criminal rate. It is increasing here because the security that they get here they are not many so for that, when something happening in the night nobody to comes to your rescue. Rural Montserrado County female

The main problem that we are facing in Liberia now is the criminal rate. The criminal rate is too high in Liberia, like the way we just came for meeting, by the time you leave your door, another person will just go there and just pack up everything. People are afraid that when you talk, they will definitely kill you. So the criminal rate in the country is too much. Grand Gedeh County female

The security system that she's talking about, not enough security because sometimes you will be in a problem and those police people, they share their number all over. But if you are in danger and you happen to call them, they don't respond to you on time. The people can finish doing all they want to do to you before they come. Grand Gedeh County female

In Grand Gedeh the criminal rate is high. Why? Because we have a central prison here that they bring criminals to and sometimes they burglarize. People leave from various places to come and do business, and the business they came to do here is not only to sell but to destroy another person's sweat and get rich. There's no security. Grand Gedeh County female

The raping case here, day before yesterday Saturday, I saw it on the poster. The man raped a one year old girl. Gbarpolu County female

There's too much is violence in our community and in our town. When you have a problem you take it sometimes to the chief. If you do not give money they will not solve your problem. That person who has money, that is the person they are looking up to. If you don't have money, your problem will just be hurting you. You go sit down with it. Rural Montserrado County female

Men Throughout the Country Are Concerned About the Lack of Jobs and Opportunity

Yes, one thing I am really looking at is the unemployment rate is still high in this country, especially for the youth. There are too many unemployed youths....Really the government, they say they want to help the youth but the youth, they are not really benefiting. Nimba County male

Where I have the problem is the job business. There are no jobs in this country. Because the companies that in this country I think they going to employ people, everybody is on contractor level. Nimba County male

Jobs are not too available in the Country; so like for example, if you do not get a contact you can't get job now. Like for example, you learned key things in trade that you paid money for. Now when the time reaches for you to get small job it can be very hard. Job facilities are not too much. Grand Kru County male

For me the problem mainly is unemployment. That is one of the key factors because, these days, people go to school, graduate, no job. People all in the street looking for jobs, you see people running around, no job. Monrovia male

Sometime we the youth find ourselves doing all kinds of activities because there's nothing going on if you're out of high school. I graduated in 2004. I haven't gone back to school because there's no financial support, and my parents don't have it. So I have to do barbering, to be cutting hair just to survive. This is what I'm doing right now. So, the country system is going backward. Monrovia male

A Lack of Educational, Social and Economic Opportunities for Youth is Also a Problem

What's not going well in Liberia right now?

The problem we are facing in Ganta for now is social activities. We have more social activities in Ganta that are affecting the youths. Some people will get money and they don't establish a school or a different thing but entertainment center. We've got a newly established entertainment center they called Fender. If you go there now you will find more youths there drinking. Nimba County male

One of the key things I am really facing problem with is, because we high school students, if we come out of high school, everybody doesn't have the opportunity to attend university or to go other colleges around here. Nimba County male

When the children finish high school now, like 12th grade, the money is too much for them to go college. And now, when you don't go college you can't work. Others just float. Nimba County female

Like what my man said, when we graduate from high school, there's no university or vocational school here, we end up with the shovel to dig gold just to help our self. Tell me now if a man has four to five children and is not working, how will he feed them? You just have to go do hard work just to feed your family. Gbarpolu male

For me, I'm one of the high school graduates. Since then I am not going to school because of financial circumstance. Monrovia male

We are not getting the financial that we need to carry on forward, we the youth. Monrovia male

You send your child to school, your child graduates but there's no work, then nothing for the child to do. Then they go on gold mine, get on motorbikes, suffer, all that one. Grand Gedeh County female

Each County Reports Concerns Specific to Its Region, but Roads Are a Common Complaint in All

Grand Gedeh

Roads
Health care
Crime

Lofa

Roads
Health care

Nimba

Roads
Land use disputes
Crime

Grand Kru

Roads
Corruption
Water and Sanitation
High prices

Monrovia

Crime/drugs
Infrastructure (sanitation, water, electricity, roads/traffic)

Rural Montserrado

Roads
Education
Crime/theft
Local leadership

Gbarpolu

Roads
Water and sanitation
Lack of local decisionmaking

Corruption and Nepotism Are a Particular Complaint in Grand Kru County

All is about what, corruption.
Grand Kru County Female

Conflict can come due to the lack of fairness; you know corruption is on the rampage. Donors give out money and they can say this institution should manage this money for some project then one or two person can just corrupt the entire institution and go with impunity. People cannot be brought to justice for their wrong doing as we speak. That alone is what I think is one of the fears people are calculating on to bring conflict tomorrow. Grand Kru County male

Corruption is too much in Liberia. The things our big-big people are not supposed to do, then they put their hands in there. Maybe since I'm poor I get a case in the court. I'm poor so I don't have money to give them, so the person who wrongs me, they will assume that person to be right person. Grand Kru County Female

Views of Government



NDI
December 2013

Views of Government

- President Sirleaf is generally highly regarded, particularly by women, who repeatedly praise her leadership on women's issues (particularly rights, education and rape) and education in general. Other Administration accomplishments include advancements in health care, freedom of speech, justice, peace/stability and labor rights.
- The most common critiques of President Sirleaf are her failure to get prices under control, unemployment, corruption and the increasing costs of education.
- Men are also generally favorable, but tend to place criticism of the President on her ministers, who come in for much harsher critiques than their boss. They accuse her appointees of being unqualified, self-interested and out of touch. Some say she has been let down by the people she has around her. Grand Gedeh participants are much more critical of the President and her administration than participants from other counties.
- Lawmakers receive mixed reviews. Some participants, particularly in Nimba, Lofa and Grand Kru, report more contact with their lawmakers and, accordingly, tend to be more positive.
- In contrast, participants in Grand Gedeh, Gbarpolu and Montserrado (both rural and in Monrovia) criticized lawmakers for being out of touch and ignoring the needs of those outside Monrovia.

Views of Government, Cont'd

- In addition to asking lawmakers to focus on issues of local importance such as roads, education and health care, many participants requested that their lawmakers spend more time in the districts, talking with and listening to residents.
- County officials also receive mixed reviews. Gbarpolu residents praised their county officials for cracking down on moto drivers, reaching out to residents and improving roads in the city. Nimba and Lofa residents also pointed to positive achievements. Again, Grand Gedeh and Montserrado residents are more critical. Grand Kru county officials are credited with making small improvements, but criticized for not focusing on the roads.

Women, Especially, Hold Generally Positive Views of the President

She makes our children go to school. They can bring free uniform for them, some of our streets in Monrovia were ugly but they are fixing them and they bringing good good development. Rural Montserrado County female

The president doing a major work but sometimes we Liberian we can't praise people. When you do your part, the day when you die that's the time they give you praise. So she's trying her best. Monrovia female

They are doing well. Right now, the women (the president) cannot do everything alone for everybody. Where she stretched her hands at least its little bit fine for us. Nimba County Female

Yes, looking at the present government right now, they are putting something in place like the health system, which is really traveling around the country like in Liberia, they are doing their all possible best to make sure that people are treated properly to at least be able to be well and live in the country. The present government is doing some of those things that the youth is benefiting from, like the school system, there are other people who are having scholarships to go to school to be able to empower themselves to become a better person for the future. Nimba County male

Some of the good things I really like about the president is really women. We were not able to even speak out, to even talk among people, but now these days some of us we are attending the night schools, Most women are busy these days. In the evening by the time 6, 5 you see women going to school. At least when they say you're having a meeting, even women are able to speak their minds. Lofa County female

Well the good thing I like about the president and her Ministers is now women have rights; anything they do women can take part. Like before, when they doing something that just so so men used to go there but now women can take part. Lofa County female

Some of the good jobs that have been done by the President and her Ministries I really love is education. We never used to have a college in the various Counties but now I'm very happy now that we have college in Voinjama now. Even those that don't have money to go to Monrovia to go to school can stay here and learn better. Lofa County female

The good that I see is education, she is doing her best to enable everyone to go to school. You know every youngster that is coming up are now fighting to go to LU to help then get their high school document. This is really good to go to school. Grand Kru County male

She's trying her best. Everything is hard. The starting part is hard and the war brought too much. In Monrovia when you go down Waterside, you'll see pupu all floating all in the communities, all in the streets. But now at least theres some change. Grand Kru County female

The Sirleaf Administration is Credited for Improvements In Several Areas



Education



Health care



Development



Freedom of Speech



Labor policies



Justice

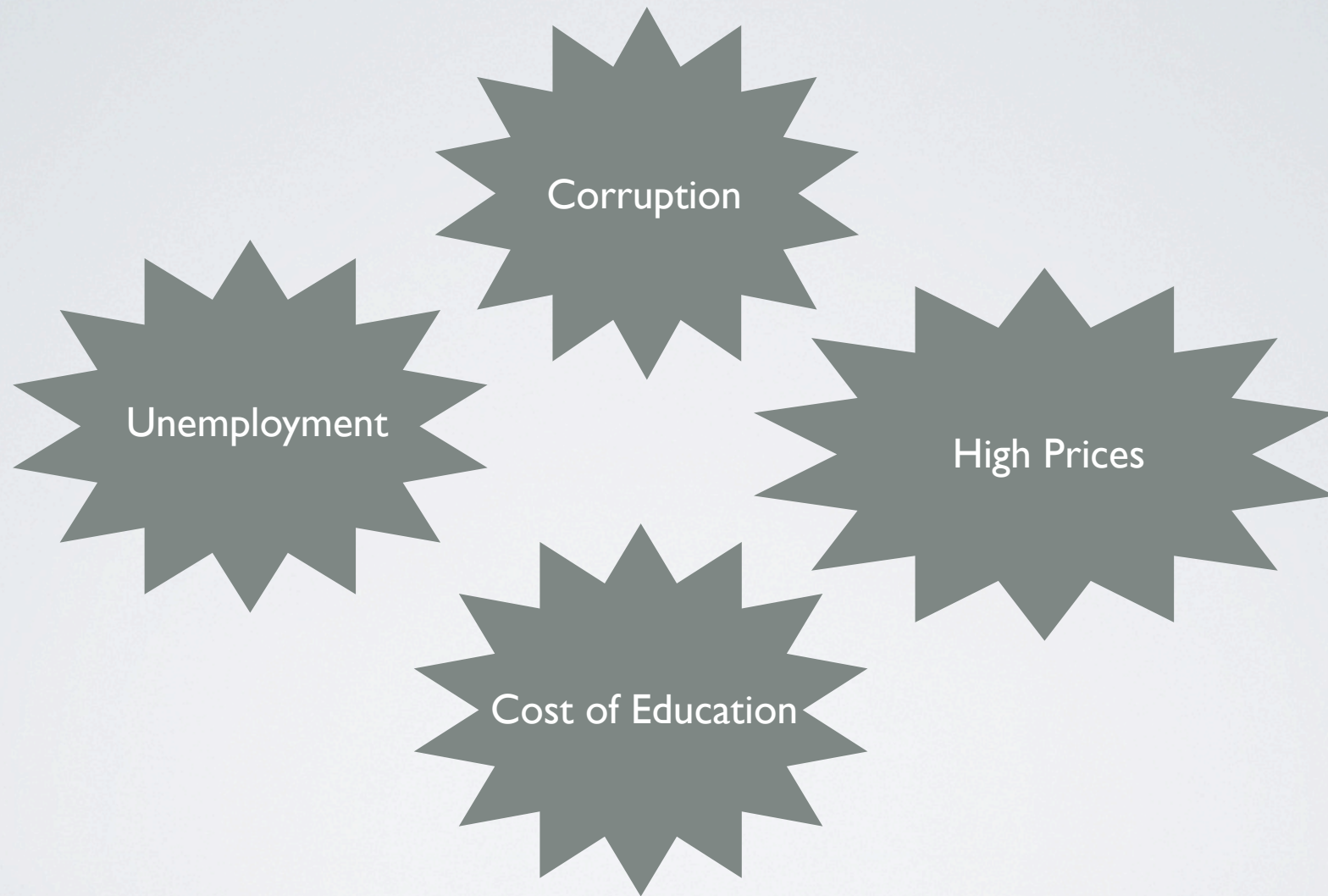


Peace



Women's Rights

The Most Common Criticisms of President Sirleaf's Administration



Men Are Favorable Too, but Are More Critical of Ministers and Hold Them Responsible for Problems

For the president I say “bravo” to her but for the Lands and Mine ministry, I’m having problem with them. When they are making decisions they put their own interest instead of the local people first. Also the public works ministry, they talk about decentralization but they are only looking at Monrovia to be Liberia. We also need good roads in the various county too so let them try an think about us. Gbarpolu County male

She is doing her best but actually, those who she put trust in to work in her government to make sure that things go well, most of them let her down. Rural Montserrado County male

She’s doing some good and some bad because the people that are around her. Because she’s building bridges, she’s building schools but the bad one is she doesn’t have price control. Monrovia female

Like the Ministry of Public Works, like when Minister Samuel Kofi Woods was there there, he is not an engineer but he set records. But this present woman that they brought there she is not doing anything. Monrovia female

For the president, she is providing us roads and other things. But what she is not doing well is she put her ministers in a position where he’s not qualified. Monrovia male

For me, I will look at it from a broad prospective; I will look at it from the president. When she came into power, she was able to increase civil servant salary. That was very fine. Because in the past, people came to work for no pay and she increased their pay. Today, people get better pay. But she put her people into government positions. When they embezzle, they don’t audit them, they go sky free. That’s one of the things she doing that is not fair. Monrovia male

We are talking about the ministries in Liberia and I want to talk about the education ministry. Of course we have the free education then, the education ministry is not working against that. When I say they not working, you have the various schools in Zwedru, the DEOs, the CEOs everybody here, but then we notice that they can’t even visit any campus...DEOs are supposed to go and visit the classroom and sit down to see how well the teacher is doing the work. But they will just sit down in the office there doing nothing. Grand Gedeh County male

To be frank, the president is working. Is just that you can’t be hundred percent but since she got in the seat there, there been lot of changes, lot of policies been put into place... But the people down the line, they are not getting to the people. Because you don’t expect the president to leave from Monrovia and come and say “ok today I will stand on this street to build this street.” Her work is fine but that people down the line trying to damage her image. Grand Gedeh male

I will say the President Madam Sirleaf is doing well, but other people do not know their right from wrong. She doesn’t do things in isolation but she does things in consultation. But Liberians, we are too boastful. When they put you there the next thing you do is come in that car you bought instead of doing the things you’re supposed to do, for which she put you there for. So her appointments are not bad, but those who she appointed are not doing good. Grand Kru County male

One thing we want to observe is that they are not even monitoring the various ministries. For example, education. There are lots of teachers in the classroom that are working assiduously. By the end of the term, they are not realizing what they supposed to have. Two, those people who should be in the field to see into it that people are working, they are not doing their work as they supposed to do. Lofa County male

Grand Gedeh Residents Are More Likely to Be Critical of the Administration

They are not doing well. They are talking for themselves.
Grand Gedeh
female

The president is not working. They say there is free and compulsory education. But how well are they implementing this? The public works minister, the people who are supposed to go around and see about taxation, they just talk about it on the air then they back off. They say that's freedom of speech. I want them to implement something. If you say today we should all go to meeting, let us go to meeting but you can't sit up there and talk about it.
Grand Gedeh County male

The president, all her ministries all her ministers, we don't find any Grand Gedehs there. Moreover, if we have more role in the ministries, we will benefit. Really it's because she's against us actually. Grand Gedeh County male

Some Participants, Particularly in Nimba, Lofa and Grand Kru, Praised Their Lawmakers

Actually I don't know much about other counties but for our own lawmakers we have here, I think some of them are doing well. For example our representative for district one, he has helped lot of people. Especially the youth have benefited from his scholarship and some of the community has also benefited from the development he has brought, like the hand pump and other things like infrastructure and toilet building in the community. I think he's doing well. Nimba County male

They are doing well by taking their time to visit their people and to hear them speak to them and they ask them about their requests they put before them. They are doing well to answer them. Nimba County female

The way they are building youth place and how they bringing youth together, they are doing well. Nimba County female

One of the good things the lawmakers are doing is to pass into law that every girl child attend school. Lofa County female

The Representative and Senators always come to see us and talk with us and we can talk with them and when they go up there. Grand Kru male

Ok, one good thing our Lawmakers are doing is that they presented a bill in the House of Parliament and they do lobby in the interest of the people. Grand Kru male

Others, Particularly in Grand Gedeh, Gbarpolu and Montserrado, Criticized Their Representatives For Being Out of Touch and Ignoring People Outside Monrovia

The lawmakers are the people we elected but when they go up there, they don't perform their duty towards us the citizens. And when they go up there, they do their personal activities, they don't come down to see about us in the interior. Grand Gedeh male

They are not doing their work well. Because they are residing down there in Monrovia doing their own personal job. But we that elected them, they are not catering to us. They have to come down and speak to the people that elected them. And also to make sure that the city should be clean. Grand Gedeh male

The lawmakers from Grand Gedeh, they are not advocating for us. They are there to advocate for us right? But once they go up there, like for example when the company comes, you have to pass through them so that they can come to your county to be able to work, so that the poor man can get his or her own to eat....So they are not working. As a lawmaker they are supposed to come down to us, as a lawmaker, you come down to us and we discuss. Grand Gedeh female

The only thing we could hear when you want learn about this man, since he got in power, he is not doing anything for the community but he is behind our girlfriends. Yes, these are the things that going on, and really, he's not doing anything. Whatever money they send, he put it in his pocket. Monrovia male

The representative that we have there, he's not doing anything. It will take a long time to drive somewhere because the road is very, very bad. We the community people got together to build a bridge, a single bridge, that we got to him talk to him about all the time but he did nothing about it. I got together and tried to make something. Monrovia male

Acarus Gray said he was going to be able help us with any problem, anything we need in the community. After he came to power, we can't even lay an eye on him. Every time when we call upon him, he always promises us oh, he gives us time. When the time reaches, he can't come to us. It's very bad like that. Monrovia male

They are just sitting down over there, they are not doing anything. Those who brought the war, they are sitting down over there, nothing good they going over there for us. Monrovia female

We want talk to that Representative, she's owing us plenty of money. After she ran her campaign, she was supposed to build our high school here. Government gave the money today, today we never lay eye on it. A different NGO is helping us here to build our high school. Rural Montserrado County female

Why is it that those guys will be given money for Agriculture breaks and they don't even have a backyard garden in the first place? I think we the poor people need the money more because we will make good use of it than those lawmakers who will just enrich themselves and their family so they are not doing anything for us. Gbarpolu male

Since we voted for them, they were supposed to come to us but they didn't. I think it's three years now since we voted for them. Me, I never hear or see them. Gbarpolu female

In Addition to Addressing Local Problems, Participants Ask their Lawmakers to Keep in Touch and Listen

One thing I will ask him, because during the campaign, they used to go from community to community. The first question I would pose to him is, “why this time, since you won the representative post, you have not come in my community yet?” Nimba County male

Yes, one of the main things I will tell the lawmaker, the very first thing is you were elected by us. Please pay constant visits to us and let us know what is unfolding so that we all can discuss what will be good for us. Lofa County male

I am going to tell him that you were not appointed, we elected you. If that president appointed you, you could’ve just go and just be there, do anything she tells you to do, you do it. But we elected you. Visit us here frequently, come and hear from us what we have in mind and hear what we need. Also whatsoever you’re doing up there, you should come down here. Take the office down to us so that we will know that we the ones that put you there. Lofa County male

Some of them when they were not in power, you use to beep them they would call you. Since they’ve been elected they hardly call people. Lofa County female

What I will do is that, firstly, I will tell the man we need your office here because it not possible that I leave here and go Monrovia today and deliver letter to you. So we need your office here. Grand Gedeh County male

As for me I will ask the lawmaker why when they are making laws they can’t come to us and talk to us. When they up there when they’re ready to make laws, why they can’t come back to us to ask us what really affecting us? Grand Kru County female

For me since I elected my representative I have not seen him. If I have the opportunity to see him, I will tell him that he failed us and I will also tell him about his wrong doing. Monrovia male

If my lawmaker was right here in my presence today, the first thing I will tell her, ma, you have forgotten about Todee. I have not seen anything you have done for this district or visiting us. Maybe you are doing some things but it is hidden. We are not seeing you. If we are not seeing you it means you are not doing anything for us. Rural Montserrado County male

County Governments Receive Mixed Reviews As Well

Positive

The government made the pen-pen [motorcycle drivers] stop because they were causing accidents and passing between people. That's one of the good things the government has done. Gbarpolu County female

I think the local government is doing well. For example we have two streets in town. The city cooperation makes sure these roads are pith well, as you can see. Cars can go up and down. Before it never used to be like that so our county government is doing well. Gbarpolu County male

Before the government used to give county development funds and we never saw them doing anything with it. We never heard about it but now this present county government, when that money came, they called us in a meeting to discuss what we want to do and how we want to use it, things like road development and electricity. Gbarpolu County male

Yes, the only thing that I see in this area here is this road project they're doing. I think that is the only good thing I see but It is not yet done properly. Lofa County female

They are doing well oh, because they've built the midwife home, built schoolhouses for some people. All the villages that are on the road, they are building schoolhouses there. Because from the road to go there, that is L\$100.00 on motorbike. Nimba County female

They are doing well. They are cleaning the streets. The houses that don't have roofs they are cleaning them. But as for education, at least some of us have plenty of children and now most of my children are not going to school. As a leader you are supposed to know your people's condition. Nimba County female

The development superintendent, he is trying his possible best. He was the one that turned over the yellow machine to Ganta for I think one month so they can open the various streets, roads and things. Nimba County male

Our county offices are trying their best to do small-small things. They are building some houses for us. They built a small-small hall for meetings, they built city hall, they built superintendent compound, this small women's center they build here that we are using here. So we are little bit pleased with them. Grand Kru County female

Negative

Our General Town Chief, we took him to court and the case left on him. We were supposed to receive our money but he ate it. Rural Montserrado County female

They are not working. I don't see the work they are doing. Monrovia female

Montserrado, especially this Monrovia city, government need to come and renovate some of these places. The people that got this various building, the city is not up to standard. Monrovia male

One of the bad thing now is I think you can look at the whole city, there are no good roads but we have machines sitting around. No one comes and says "this other road is spoiled, let's go and fix it." The whole city is bushy. Grand Kru County male

They are not doing anything. My village has no road. When I want bring my bitter ball to Zwedru to sell, there's no good road. Sometimes motorbikes will not come because the road condition. Grand Gedeh female

How can you appoint a superintendent who did not even grow up here? Not even know anything about the county? He does not even live in Grand Gedeh, to even know how Grand Gedeh is looking, or how the people living and what the people even facing? You just sent the person because you feel that the person is connected to you or connected to your son. Grand Gedeh male

Before you make somebody superintendent, let us vote for that person. Let the person grow up within that county. The person who grew up in the capital, that person does not even have a house here. Grand Gedeh male

We are not seeing good improvement. I'm not lying to you. Lofa County female

I have a serious problem with the county government. Sometimes they will come and ask for the views of the people. "Oh what do you people think we can do for this place? What do you people think we should do? You list whatever you want." Sometimes they go and get the money and benefit themselves and do whatever that they want to. Nimba County male

Lofa and Nimba County Participants Are Generally More Positive about Government, While Those From Grand Gedeh and Montserrado Are More Negative

Generally More Positive

Lofa

Nimba

Generally More Negative

Grand Gedeh

Monrovia

Rural Montserrado

Mixed (more positive/negative about one branch of government)

Gbarpolu

Grand Kru

Key Issue One: Water and Sanitation



NDI
December 2013

Key Issue One: Water and Sanitation

- Access to clean, safe water is a highly salient issue. It is a problem in every county, but in different ways and to different degrees. Pumps are unequally distributed throughout counties, with some districts well-supplied but others without entirely.
- Grand Gedeh participants report fewer problems with drinking water access, but still pumps are not adequate in all communities.
- Some participants report easy access to pumps but many more complain that their pumps, if they exist, are often damaged, dry, restricted, overused, contaminated or subject to the whims of the owners of the land on which the pump sits.
- Those that do not have pumps nearby rely on creeks or wells and often have to travel long distances to rely on overstressed pumps in neighboring communities. The dry season presents problems for pump and well users alike.
- Access to pumps is a particular problem in Monrovia, where male participants complain that land owners apply charges or restrict hours of access, fence off the pump or fail to maintain it or keep the area clean. Monrovia residents fondly recall the days when the government supplied drinking water.
- There is little consensus on the optimal number of people served by a pump. “No more than 250” was the figure tested and nearly all participants rejected such a high number, preferring no more than 10 people to 100 people.

Key Issue One: Water and Sanitation, Cont'd

- There is also little consensus on which government body should be responsible for providing safe and clean drinking water. Participants mentioned NGOs, county governments, lawmakers, community leaders, mayors and the Ministry of Health.
- Many participants say they have access to toilets or latrines, but some say they still rely on the bush, creeks, the streets or plastic bags.
- Participants are highly aware of the problems associated with poor sanitation in their communities: diseases -- particularly for women, inconvenience and embarrassment, mosquitoes, unsafe water and bad smells. Women are responsible for cleaning yards and are more bothered by diseases caused by poor toilet access.
- Monrovia residents complain that they try to clean up their waste but the government doesn't do enough to haul it away.
- Animal waste is a problem in some communities – particularly Zwedru and Voinjama. Attempts are made in other communities to control it by fences, restrictions and frequent cleaning.
- The cattle waste problem in Zwedru is getting so acute participants demand the government take action.
- As with water supplies, there's little agreement about who or what should be responsible for sanitation. NGOs, county government, community leadership, or mayors were all mentioned.

Key Issue One: Water and Sanitation, Cont'd

- Participants show a strong sense of personal responsibility for keeping their communities clean. Many expressed a willingness to take responsibility for water and sanitation improvements themselves. “If we don’t do it, who will?”
- A proposal to combine national government offices that work on improving water and sanitation was generally well received. Participants thought the idea sounded logical, because safe drinking water depends on good sanitation, and efficient administration of water facilities.
- A few disagreed, arguing it would result in higher taxes or jobs losses.

Poor Drinking Water Access Affects All Counties, but in Different Ways and to Different Degrees

In our community we don't have drinking water; that water business is hard on us. Nimba County female

There is no safe drinking water in this place. That is the biggest problem. Some places don't even have a hand pump. They drink well water. Lofa County female

We left that salty pump. We can come draw water here but the people bury dead bodies so the water is not good for us. Rural Montserrado female

For us in Grand Kru, there is a town of about 500 persons and some of the communities' dwellers they walk like 15 minutes to the pump. Some of the people are still drawing from the creek which is still a problem. Last year people died from cholera because the same water they use to drink is the same water they use the toilet in. Grand Kru County male

Every morning, this one pump is only two gallons for a family, that's the way we can divide it. We can go to the swamp to take water from there to cook but the water there is not good. But if you don't go there, that one gallon, what will you do? You want drink, you want cook. It will not last. Gbarpolu female

In my community there's no creek, no hand pumps so when it's raining we can put bucket under the zinc to get water or we go looking for water from community to community. So this is the main problem, not enough pumps. The issue of safe drinking water is one of our big problems. Gbarpolu County male

One cause is the garbage. People passing by leave dirt. And that water will be very stinky. You will see choke rouge, mosquitoes, other insects will come there and that whole place will be look disturbing. As a human being, if you look at that water and drink it, actually it will disturb you. Actually disturb your family. You could get sick from that. Monrovia male

Pumps Are Inconsistently Distributed within Counties

We don't have water in our community. We have to buy water every day.
Monrovia female

Drinking water is a problem, my brother. We need more pumps in this community. When you check the whole of Zwedru right now, you will not even find more than 30 good pumps in this city. So for my community right now, we only control one pump. Grand Gedeh Male

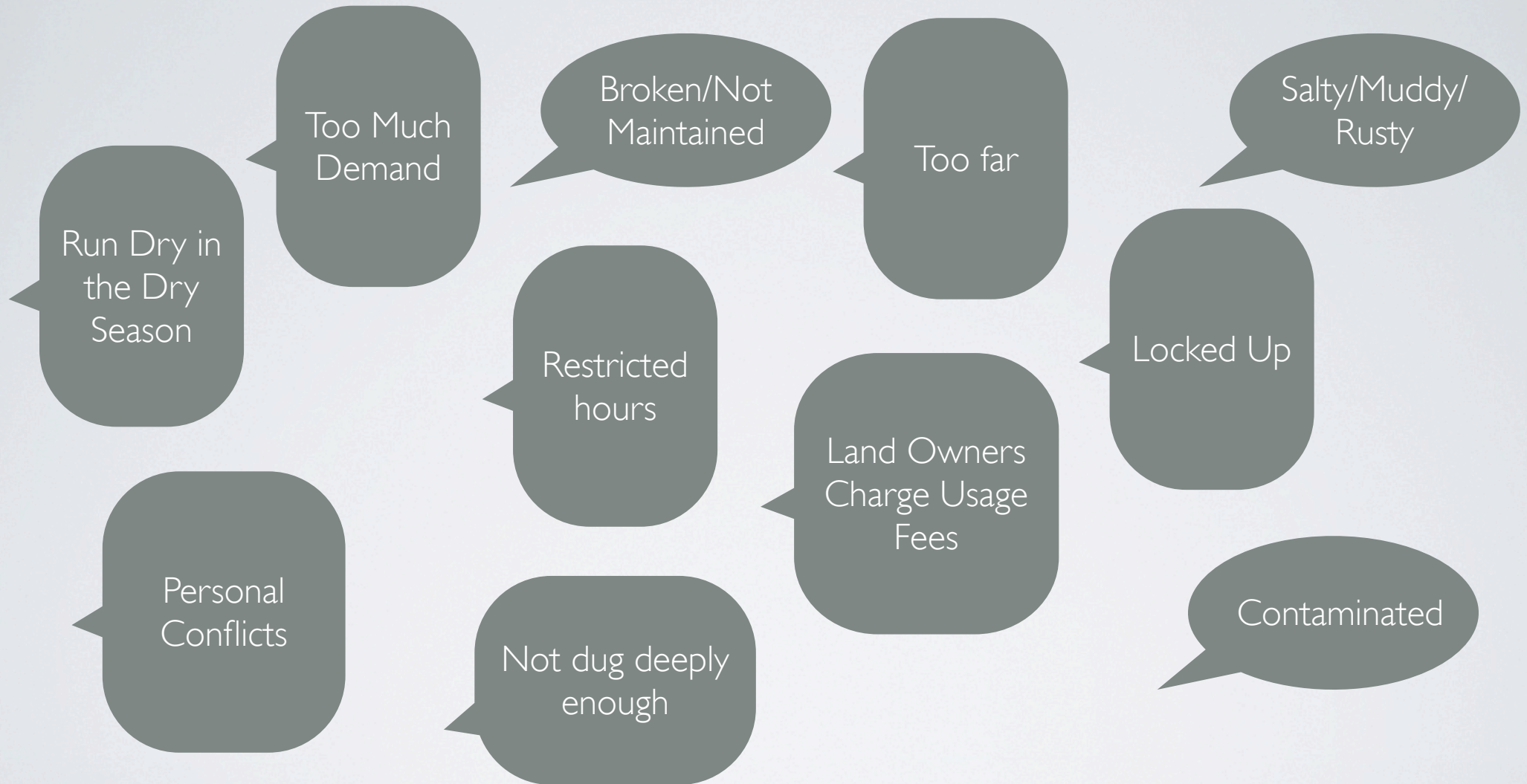
As for communities like Yang, Own's town and the big, big communities that are on the road, we don't really face problem with water. But villages such as Molley Town, other villages, if you walk from here two hours, three hours you will not find any hand pumps and the people drink from the creeks. The creek is not safe for drinking. Rural Montserrado County male

New Bopolu, It doesn't have water, it doesn't have a toilet. It has only one pump. Gbarpolu County female

Like my community Basee Quarter, we do not even have a pump there, no single pump there. We suffer from it because right now where we can draw water from is almost to Kolahum. If I'm walking it's about ten minutes. Lofa County male

We shouldn't really focus on those in the central part of Ganta that have access to pumps. Other communities outside of Ganta city, they are part of Ganta, but they are out of the central town. They are suffering because of the drinking water issue. Nimba County male

When Pumps Exist, They Often Have Problems



Grand Gedeh Participants Report Fewer Water Problems than Other Counties

For ERZ community, we have safe drinking water there. Although the whole community has two hand pumps, the one that's up, we are far from it but the one that's down, it's safe. Grand Gedeh County female.

Yes, for my community, we have pumps here. We drink from pumps. We are not drinking from a well. Grand Gedeh County male.

I think if we come to the safe drinking water, we have pumps around our environment. I think in Zwedru, I work with local NGOs so that I see people building pumps all around. I think that of course we can appreciate the effort of people that come to our aid by giving us safe pump water. Grand Gedeh County male.

As for me I live Telecom community and we have very safe drinking water there. We got three hand pumps there. At least the surrounding of the drinking water is very safe. Grand Gedeh County female.

We get our own community water. We get water and sewer here, producing water for us. All the pipes are open, how can we get water to our houses? Grand Gedeh County male.

I think if we come to the safe drinking water, we have pumps around our environment. I think in Zwedru, I work with local NGOs so that I see people building pumps all around. I think that of course we can appreciate the effort of people that come to our aid by giving us safe pump water. Grand Gedeh County male.

Rural Residents, Primarily Women and Children, Must Travel Far to Get Their Water If There's No Pump

Because the distance from to my house to the pump is very far and the children need to go to school. At the time you need water you go to the pump the amount of human beings you will see there. If you do not wake up 5:00 in the morning to go put your things in line you will not get water. The pump is locked at 12:00 to rest. If you leave pumping until 12:00 the water will be gone.
Grand Kru County female

If you don't have a chance to draw water from the pump, if the pump is dry and you need water. If you have a stream around your house you have to go there for water. Lofa County female

There's only one pump in our area. People from far off come to draw water. There are certain times when you go there and there are people plenty. You can't get water.
Gbarpolu County female

I leave from the house and walk about 15mins before reaching the place where we can get water from. The dry season is coming so most of the well water will dry so we can cough hard time for the water business. Gbarpolu County male

Yes it's affecting the women If the pump is far, you will not see men going for water, so women will be going for water. They will be suffering, and they were not created by God to be suffering. Lofa County male

Monrovia Men Complain that Water Sources on Private Land Are Subject to Charges, Misuse and Restrictions by Landowners

We even can volunteer or somebody from among us can volunteer and “say let’s put this pump on my land, on behalf of the community.” If we do it, it’s a problem because that same person can take it as personal property. For example, you cannot draw water from MusuSlon’s yard without paying money to her. They put the pump there for everybody. Of course the pump needs catering. So we want for this government at least, able to give everybody water for this problem to solve. Monrovia male

The place we get water from to take bath, cook and do other things, a fellow bought the land. He said that “oh, I decided to build on this land.” So he built a fence. I think few weeks or month from now, when he starts building on that land, there will be, nowhere for us to get water from, to even take bath and to cook. So mainly, it’s a problem that we really facing in our community. Monrovia male

Sometimes the hand pump is requested to be built by the community. Somebody will say “oh, I will give my piece of land so the work can be done there.” When the pump is installed, the caretaker for that pump there will want to act on his or her own will. Maybe you will be trying to get a bucket of water to take bath, because the pump is supposed to be open at certain times and you are appealing to just get a bucket of water. You come they will say no we should wait for this time. That’s the time we all discussed for the pump to be open. Serious problem. Monrovia male

As the man rightly said, for me my community, we have one hand pump. And that hand pump, if you don’t pay money, you don’t draw water. So it gives you serious problems. So government needs to see reason to at least to create means to built one or two hand pumps for public use. Monrovia male

As for my community, we have only one hand pump. Paying for the water doesn’t mean anything. But it depends if the water is well taken care of. The person that got the land that they built the pump on, their children roaming around, shitting, toileting, doing what so ever infects us. And sometimes, it makes some people run away from the water and not drink the water again. It will not be safe because children toileting around the pump, making the pump dirty. It will not be safe for people to drink. So sometimes we find it difficult that we got to go a distance to another community before we can get water. Monrovia male

In Tommy community where I live, if the government comes to build the pump, they will usually ask where to put the pump. If you put it on private land owned by a person usually what the people do is, when they want to draw water, that’s the time they will open the pump. The pump usually opens by 4:00 – 9:00. That’s what they wrote on the pump but when you go there, you will see that people will come open the pump by 4:00 when they close it by 5:00. Monrovia male

Monrovia Residents Fondly Recall the Days of Government-Supplied Water

The government is responsible for giving us water. But before, in normal days we had pumps all over. Monrovia female

The government used to bring water into the communities and give us a meter but now it's not happening. Monrovia Female

The government should try like it was in normal days. Every person had their own pump for running water, you just run to the pump. The government should provide a pump, running water to every house. Let's cut this water business down. Monrovia male

There Was Little Consensus About How Many People Should Be Served by One Pump, but up to 250 Is Seen as Too Many

Maybe the number of people that supposed to get access to one hand pump within a particular community, it should be precisely thirty or maybe forty. Nimba County male

It will not be correct because if they put the 250 people on that side to draw water and the dry season comes, the water get dry and you will need water. How will you manage when the water goes dry? It will not be correct. Nimba County female

At least 30 people or the highest should be 50 people, because I believe the amount of water in the well during dry season will not be able to serve 250 people; it may serve 30 or 50 people. Lofa County female

I say fifty because other people have huge number of human beings living in the same house. So if am saying fifty, like about ten houses will be able to draw from that pump. There will be no problem. I can remember when we had a closed well. Dry season it can go dry. In the morning you wake up 5:00 or 4:00 to be the first to draw the first clean water. If you forget, you will carry home mud before you get the water. Grand Gedeh County female

I want for people to go by the size of the community before they suggest the number of pumps, the size the population. Grand Kru County male

If you want to put a pump in each community or in each place for person, for me 15 people should go there and draw from there. Monrovia male
At least 10 people. Monrovia female

At least, you could just estimate hundred or one fifty at least, hundred. Rural Montserrado County male

We can't say a special number because the other people own the pump, When it spoils you can't stop them from drawing water from the other pump so let the pump just be enough for everybody. Rural Montserrado County female

Before the number to a pump, you should put pump in a community according to number of the community. You see the community is large, how many pump you will put there? Monrovia male

At least 100 people, because you say 250 people. If you want to go to work and you are the last person to get your water, to go to work will be hard. Lofa County male

There's Also Little Agreement on Who Should be Responsible for Providing Safe Drinking Water

NGOs

County
Government

Lawmakers

Community
Leadership

Mayors

Ministry of Health

People

The Government

While Many Participants Have Latrines or Toilets, Some Still Rely on the Bush, Creeks, Streets or Plastic

For the surrounding villages, they still use the bush for toileting. On this main road, this road going in, from here all the way in. Concern works in about eleven communities but later added it up to fourteen. But apart from those fourteen villages, we got more than twenty villages in Todde, so the majority of villages, most of them are still suffering from latrine problem. They still use the bush for toileting. Rural Montserrado County male

Sometimes we dig hole. If there's no hole there, I use the plastic. Gbarpolu County female

I run to the creek because this whole community has only two toilets. Rural Montserrado County female

They can just pupu in the plastic in the night. Then they throw it in your yard. Monrovia female

Looking at my community, I see one pit latrine. It's not easy. Or you will see little one toilet side house or they go sit and release their self in the bushes. So if you have only one toilet in your community, it's not easy. Monrovia male

Some of my friends, they usually toilet on the bridge. The bridge that I was saying that we the community people got together to fix. They usually go toilet there because there's a big dump pile there. The dump pile usually disturbs us a lot. It smells a lot. Monrovia male

Most of the houses in this county don't have a toilet. Sometimes about fifteen houses then they get like the way that bathroom looking, they use a hole opening place like that. They just cover it with the cement, a little space. Like for ERZ community is not easy there, no toilet. Where I am there's no toilet. We throw black plastic. Grand Gedeh County female

I can say 75% use open places because the pit latrines are limited. Grand Kru County male

Participants Are Highly Aware of the Problems Associated with their Communities' Poor Sanitation Practices

Women, Especially, Are Perceived to Suffer More from Diseases Caused by Poor Sanitation



Mosquitos



Diseases



Inconvenience



Unsafe water



Smells



Embarrassment

Monrovia Residents Say they Try to Clean Up their Waste, But Complain the Government Doesn't Haul it Away

It depends on where it will be. As I said earlier if it is by the booth and I need to go to work, if I don't clear it who will. I have to clean it for myself. Monrovia female

Okay, there's a specific area they tell us, the community people, to take our dirt. Everybody in the community; not one person is taking the dirt there. We take the dirt, it spends one day, two day, they can't take it away. It's growing. The other people don't like to take their dirt, and when they start sitting down around the place . The community will start getting dirty; people will start getting sick and die. So if they came for that dirt like in two days or three days time you will find out that everybody will be able to take their dirt again, and take it to that same area. Monrovia male

Once upon a time in our community, we told every member to start paying \$25.00 every Saturday. But when the youth paid the money, every week end, after a certain time they stopped taking our dirt. The dirt starts growing beyond the yard. So we will blame our community leader that they the one will paid other people to come for our dirt. But since, the dirt just floating in the community. Monrovia male

Animal Waste Is a Problem for Some, But It Is Controlled by Fences, Restrictions and Frequent Cleaning

The only way we can deal with human waste and animals waste is fencing around your community pump. We fence around it and many times we clean around it. We will not wait for somebody to come tell us say your clean around before we do it. We can always maintain the place. Lofa County female

I have a serious problem when it comes to this animal waste. Like for example you see many of those Malian cow herders, they pass around any community they feel like and the see cow shitting all around, I got a problem with it. There some children that are playing, the children they don't even know. Some of them move with bare feet, stepping in some of those things I have serious problems with it, this is some of the problem that I have especially when it comes to cows. Lofa County male

In normal days, even if somebody has dog in their yard, their house should be fenced in, number one. So the government should put it. Lofa County female

In a healthy community, it is not necessary to have humans and animals in the same area. We have big land, they should take the cows on the highway to a special place. The man takes them from one fence, he takes them to the highway, they finish eating, he brings them back to the fence. Those that move around with those animals and things like that, they should tell them where to pass and where to not pass. Nimba County male

What my sister said, the animals, they are not supposed to be among human beings. Grand Gedeh female

We want to put stop to bringing cattle to town. They should have a special area for them to be placed. They should be kept in an area so that they can't just be scattering their manure all around. Lofa County male

Cattle Waste Is a Problem in Zwedru and Residents Want the Government to Take Action

I believe not ZCC should be in charge of cleaning the animal feces. The government should do it. Because they get budget from the cow business people and we being channeling this issue, telling them that they should take the cows away from the area.

Grand Gedeh County male

For the animal waste, we channel these things through the county authority. Every day the citizens speak about it and they can't even function of it. Even if you go and even touch the cow, the one who minds the cow if he hurts you, that's free. They broke somebody's hand before because of that same animal waste.

Grand Gedeh County male

In this particular county we've got to talk about the cows. We are tired. When they are ready they will just put the cows all in the street, they will just toilet all in the street, with all around with these big, big flies that will give you some kind of sickness. We are tired.

Even a cowherd went and beat somebody here and all and he was free.

Grand Gedeh female

When it comes to animal waste, you see the Malian cows. I got vexed one night I was walking right to the triangle, I stepped in the cow feces. I was not even expecting that cow feces would be around that area. And it got me vex over plus. Not they carrying the cow all around so the cow feces is all over. Grand Gedeh County male

There's Little Agreement on Who Should be Responsible for Sanitation, But Participants Show a Strong Sense of Personal Responsibility

NGOs

County
Government

Big-Big People

Themselves

Children

Mayors

Community
Leadership

Participants Expressed Willingness to take Responsibility for Water and Sanitation Improvements Themselves

Ourselves [should be responsible], because if someone comes and does something in my yard, I know if it remains there, it will affect me. So I will take shovel and clean it. Like when the dry season is coming, you get your place you dig your correct toilet then you go ahead and use it. Gbarpolu female

You cannot sit down and wait for someone to come and do that [clean up] for you. Rural Montserrado County female

You know you and I know we cannot live in dirt. You will get sick and I will get sick so we look at it and clean our environment. Rural Montserrado County female

The place I come from we have a town crier there. The town crier passes around and tells us to clean our community... and when he says it, we do it. Gbarpolu County female

It should be ourselves. In every community there is a chairperson. So the chairperson should appoint some youth every Saturday. They make sure and clean the place, especially the first Saturday of every month. Monrovia female

I will say the community dwellers are responsible for their own safe drinking water. Because the representative will not be living in your community so he may not care. You are responsible for the safety of your own water. Monrovia male

But if they [leaders] provide pit latrines, you will not see all kinds of people toileting near someone's house. That's why providing a pit latrine could be much better. Then the leader, you will not hold them responsible, you will hold yourselves responsible. Monrovia male

When it comes to cleaning in your own community, I think the household should be responsible for that. Your health matters so if you see a feces within your surroundings, you must first clean before city ordinance comes. Monrovia male

Our very selves are responsible [for clean water]. We have to ask the government and we are the government, so we have to put together so that at least we can make things very fine for ourselves. Lofa County male

The community members are also responsible. The town chief will say go and clean your area but he will not come there to clean the place. He will give the order but you as community member will help him to clean the community. Lofa County male

You have to galvanize the community members to see into it that you establish your own project; when you start asking for help other people will come in to help you. But if you just stay and say that government will do everything that will not be good for the community. Lofa County male

I say we our very selves are responsible. You can't say that government is supposed to do this or that government supposed to do that particular thing. We will take care of the pump fencing the place ourselves we are responsible for that; the place can't be dirty you say you will wait for government, your very self should do it. Lofa County female

Some of these things need to be put in place by the citizens themselves. They won't just sit there and look at the government to do everything. There are some things that the government needs to look at and bring to their disposal then they will tell them what to do and what not to do. Nimba County male

We don't ask the government to come from way up and come down in your community and clean around your hand pump. Like sometimes the community chairman can decide that every month, all the people that in the community that draw water from that pump, should come and clean around the pump. Nimba County male

Some Thought Combining National Government Offices that Work on Water and Sanitation Is Logical and Would Improve Efficiency

The idea is good, but when you put a lot of people together to do one job it can spoil. So the best thing is the people who know about water business, put them one side. And then the people who know about sanitation business go on the other side. Gbarpolu County female

I agree that all of them should be in one office; when we separate them, what impact will they make? So let them work together. Rural Montserrado County female

It's alright. The same water we drinking, it's got to be clean and that's drinking water so when we're talking about the cleaning up and the water, it's all the same family there. Monrovia female

I will agree to combine water and sewer and sanitation because it will help. They will make the place clean before they try and put pipes in. So for me, when they try and combine water and sewer, that will be neat. Monrovia male

Yes I would agree to it. For one thing, Public Works also deals with construction and if for instance Water and Sewer wants to work somewhere, Public Works has to go inspect the area to see whether that place will be good for pump to be installed there, whether that place is safe for pump or either safe for a well. Public Works has to go there and inspect and then come and tell the Water and Sewer people to put the water there. Lofa County male

They will also talk about the environment, how to keep the environment clean, so I believe for me it will be good that they all work together in one office. Lofa County male

It will be fine for me in that they will be working on plan, one agenda. That is if they agree and say let's found drinking water, it means everywhere you go in the country or in the counties, you will find drinking water. And that identical water will be monitored by agents from that identical office. Nimba male county

It's alright for it to be in group. That's the same cleaning up; the same sanitation. Clean water, clean living place; clean environment so that's the same thing. All of them are supposed to go together. Lofa County Female

It is a good idea because when they are not together they will have different idea but when they are together they will share ideas that will make the work easy to do and you will have power over those that are under you. Grand Kru County Male

A Few Were Skeptical, Believing It May Result in Higher Taxes or Job Losses

I see it that the work will not be effective. For example we have had Water and Sewer in this nation and it has not gone everywhere except where we have local NGOs in the community now to bring hand pumps. So if we only have one leader for that, it will not be effective. Rural Montserrado County male

No, really when you decide in that direction to unify, it won't be fine because their branches will not be placed in some of those areas within the country. Nimba County male

No. Because they are not doing the same thing. You are talking about and cleanliness. Dirt and cleanliness can't be together. It's not the same thing. Grand Gedeh County female

The idea of all those people coming together in one unit is not good. If these people in public works and health come together as one unit to work, there will be a scarcity of jobs. There are other people that survive on people that are providing safe drinking water. When they join you will not be able to carry all the employees and then people will have to look for new jobs. You know how job business is hard in this country. Grand Kru County male

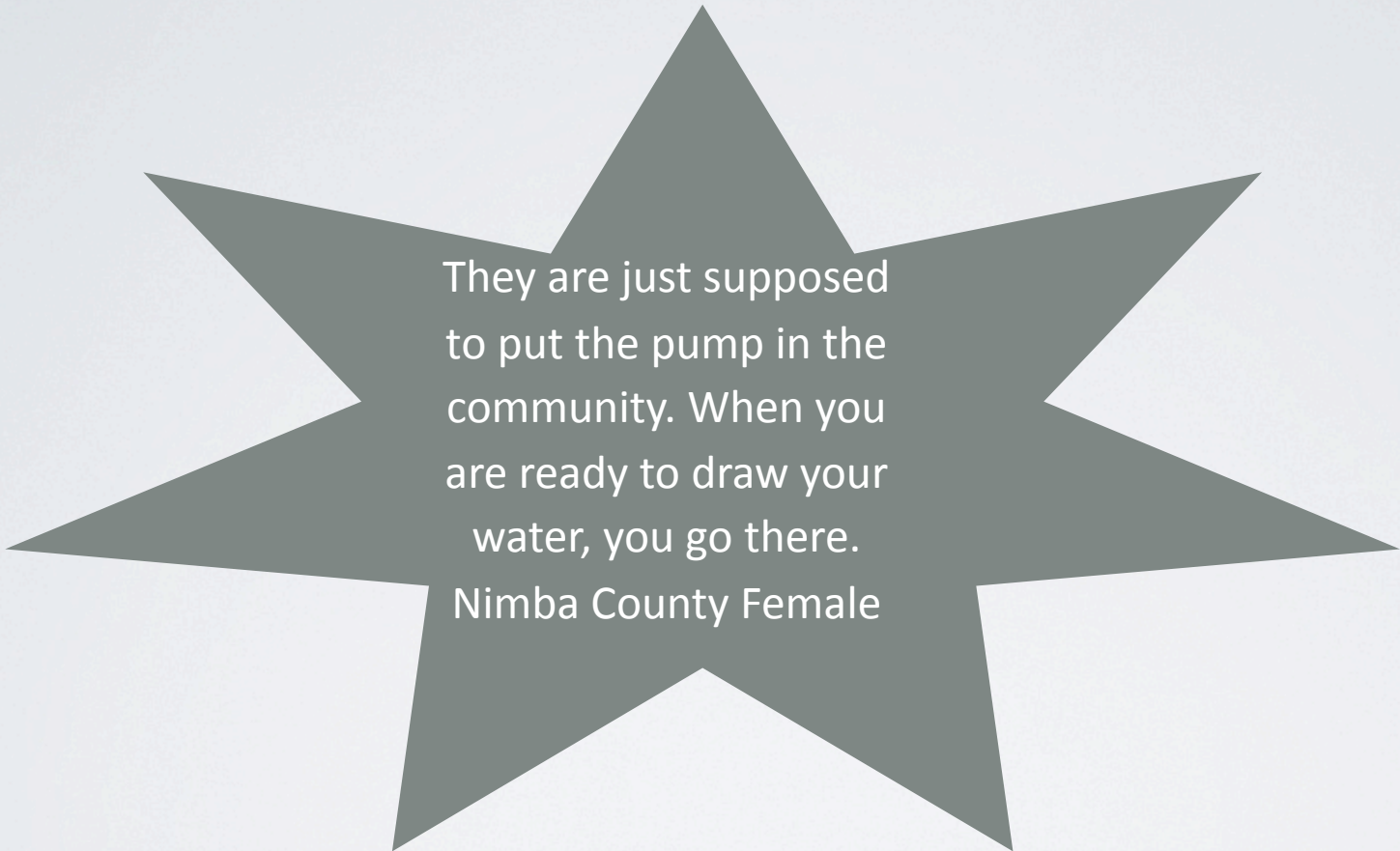
I say no because if you combine these people, there will be a high tax payment. And no country wants their citizens to suffer. Monrovia male

WASH Message Strategy Recommendations

- Avoid a debate about how many people should rely on a pump or which government body is responsible for providing it. Such a message is about process, which is much less compelling than a message that directly addresses the most basic issue in people's daily lives: They want a conveniently located pump that dispenses clean, safe water every day. They don't really care who does it, but are willing to credit someone who solves the problem.
- WASH's legislative proposal to ensure no more than 250 people per pump is problematic. Participants focused on the number 250, which they thought is much too many. WASH should avoid a discussion of how many people per pump is optimal. There is unlikely to be consensus and it draws attention away from the most important message: Access to clean, safe water every day.
- WASH's legislative proposal to combine government offices that deal with water and sanitation is generally popular but explaining how it will improve people's access to safe, clean drinking water and toilets is more important than the process of combining government offices.
- People care a great deal about water and sanitation. They are willing to take action on a variety of levels to improve both, including taking personal responsibility for building, maintaining and cleaning their water and sanitation systems, especially if they believe government is unable or unwilling to do so. This provides a substantial opportunity to encourage citizen activism and involvement on a key issue.
- Because of the salience of the issue, participants are eager to share their views on this issue with elected officials at every level, in every type of forum. Elected officials who want to engage constituents on and build support around a vital issue would be wise to choose this one.

WASH Messaging Should Focus Around Assuring Safe, Clean, Accessible Water For All

A Discussion About How Many People Per Pump or Who or What Is Responsible for Providing Water Distracts from the Most Important Issue



They are just supposed to put the pump in the community. When you are ready to draw your water, you go there.
Nimba County Female

Key Issue Two: Natural Resources



NDI
December 2013

Key Issue Two: Natural Resources

- Participants tend to associate the term “natural environment” with all elements that affect their daily lives, including roads, education, sanitation, agriculture and safety. Because it is subject to interpretation, it will be critical for CSO NRM to explain exactly what it means when it uses the term.
- Participants are very aware of the primary natural resources in their community – gold, ore, timber, rubber and diamonds are among the most frequently mentioned. However, they did not mention “land” as a resource without prompting.
- However, with prompting, many did agree that land is a natural resources. Frequently it is the resource with which they are most closely personally connected because they farm it, cut timber or mine it themselves.
- Participants are keenly aware of changes in their natural environment, primarily in terms of the lengthening and changing rainy season. Few associated climate change with resource extraction, however.
- Many, however, made a direct connection between mining and logging and declining quality of their drinking water and erosion. This presents a significant opportunity for natural resource activists to associate themselves with an extremely salient issue.
- Some participants in a few counties report direct benefit from concession agreements, primarily better roads and schools. However, most believe the primary beneficiaries of Liberia’s natural resource extraction activities are the politicians who negotiate the agreements.
- Some in Nimba County expressed concern that outsiders (other Africans or “whites”) are benefiting more from resource extraction than they are.

Key Issue Two: Natural Resources, Cont'd.

- A few men worry that conflict could arise over logging or mining issues, though this is a minority view. As an earlier section showed, participants who worry about conflict erupting believe it is more likely to stem from other causes.
- Expectations that citizens will have input over the use of natural resources in their communities are high, as is frustration by many that they have none. Some in Lofa and Nimba, however, report participating in town hall discussions about resource use in their area.
- Participants are mostly unaware of what body is responsible for deciding how social development funds get spent. They say lawmakers, town/county leaders, the superintendent, village chiefs, community leaders and mayors.
- While participants are not clear on who is responsible for deciding how social development funds are spent, they are clear on who has little say: ordinary people. They are the ones, according to most, who should have the most input because they are most familiar with the needs of the community.
- Local governments are closest to the needs of the communities, so they are the ones that should collect and disperse social development funds according to participants. However, in Grand Kru and Grand Gedeh, participants worry about corrupt local officials.
- Participants want social development funds spent on their communities' most pressing needs, which are consistently roads, education, sanitation and health care.

Participants Tend to Associate the term “Natural Environment” with all Elements that Affect Their Daily Lives

It Will Be Imperative to Explain Exactly What Is Meant by “Natural Environment”



Safety



Roads



Education



Their City



Agriculture



Sanitation

Participants Are Aware of Natural Resources in Their Community But Did Not Mention Land Without Prompting

Grand Gedeh

Gold
Timber
Iron ore
National Park
Diamonds

Grand Kru

Gold
Timber
Coconut
Oil
Diamonds
Sea

Lofa

Gold
Diamonds
Oil

Monrovia

Rubber
Gold
Iron Ore
Timber
Water
Oil

Gbarpolu

Gold
Diamonds
Iron ore
Forest

Nimba

Diamonds
Iron ore
Gold
Copper
Timber

Rural Montserrado

Gold
Rubber
Palm
River
Coal

When Prompted, Many Participants Do See Land as a Valuable Natural Resource, Often the One With Which they are Most Closely Connected

Yes, land is a natural resource because it was provided by God so that man can have free access to it, but it has gone on a very higher frequency where you see people harming each other for this land, where you do not know how this land was provided. Nimba County male

Yes, because it is natural something. That's why I say it is part of it. Lofa County male

Yes, we can farm on the land. Make rice farms, make sugar cane farms and etc., and benefit from it. Lofa County male

Yes it is some of our resources. Resources because some of the things that our parents leave for us we can use to benefit from. Grand Gedeh County female

Yes. For example, I have my land. Someone come tell me that oh this land, you got so, so, and so mineral. Monrovia male

What I really want to say is that land is a natural resource. Land business is getting hard, you see people building in the swamps. The government needs to do something about it. Monrovia female

It can be sold by the government and sometimes use the money for some development. Rural Montserrado County male

Yes, land is a natural resource. I say so because we can use to farm on it to get food to eat. Gbarpolu male

Many Participants Are Keenly Aware of Changes in Length and Timing of the Rainy Season

Few Mentioned Any Other Kinds of Environment Changes Unprompted

Just imagine, this time of year, like this it stays raining. The rain fell and our people couldn't burn their farms on time. Nimba County Female

Number one, we have climate change. Before we didn't know the special season now we can harvest anytime. Before, what I know, plum use to bear once in a year, but now, two times I have seen in this year two times. And then the weather condition changes. Like before when I was much smaller, I study that dry season starts from April and ends November. But now, any hour it can rain, any month it can rain. Sometimes dry season in any month, it can rain heavily. March use to be hot time, very hot, so that's how it 's changed. Grand Gedeh County female

Yes, I have observed changes. Like the past years we used to have two seasons (rainy and dry), but this time there is no rainy season from dry season. Like this month we're in now, November, used to be dry season but now, so, so much rain. That cutting of logs is making our weather look some kind of way. Grand Kru County male

Due to the global warming, we are expecting changes. The rain will start to fall when it's not that time. Sun will shine too much in a raining season and then rain will fall in summer excessively. So due to global warming, we expect changes. Monrovia male

Yes it has been changing small-small because now every morning it will rain. It did not used to be like that in November. Monrovia female

Things are changing because in November it never used to rain like this and we see rain continue to fall. Now is the time you're supposed to be planting and you cannot plant. Rural Montserrado County female

Here in Gbarpolu you used to see trees. In fact we had a community here called dark forest because the trees overshadowed the place but now nothing is like that now. You can stand far off and see all the buildings, so it is no longer called dark forest because of the cutting down of trees by farmers and pit sawers. Gbarpolu County male

Many Participants Made a Solid Connection Between Mining and Logging Activities and Declining Drinking Water Quality and Erosion

Cutting down trees can also cause deforestation which can attract erosion, the erosion can also get in the drinking water and it can also cause harm for those who are dwelling in that particular place. Nimba County male

The reason we're not talking is because mining has not come on this side, but in other places that they been doing it, we know that it can change the water. But here it has not happened yet so we don't know much about it. Nimba County female

Cutting down trees has happened in some parts of our area. People usually go there to cut down logs for coal burning and other things. We had a little stream here but because of cutting trees, the water dried up. The shade was helping water to continue. Because the trees were cut down, evaporation damaged the water. Lofa County male

Like the mining, or usually those that doing mining somewhere where the drinking water is close. The people can refuse because when you continue to mine, the water will not be good. And for tree sawing, that dust sometimes can run people stomach. It happened in one other town around here. Lofa County female

In Battigen the people are drinking mineral water now. There's no safe drinking water because of the mining. The way they mine, they can't go straight down, they undermine. They mine under here until they reach over there. Now the water is spoiled. So we just praying, by his grace, but anytime anything can happen. Grand Gedeh County female

Yes, it happens around the water belt where Golden Veridon is harvesting. Where the machines make road and the community in that particular area are depending on these streams, they can pass with their equipment and then water can get very dirty for cooking and drinking; this is really giving us problem. Grand Kru County male

Yes, mining in the Nali River. When you go there you will see the color change. Trees used to cover the water. Now the whole place is clear because they have cut down all the trees. Now when you taste the water, it's not the way the taste used to be. Grand Kru County male

Cutting down trees, digging holes for dirt, it creates problems for the water line. If you notice it sometimes, a mud scent can be in the water, dirt scent can be in the water. It gets dirty because the water line from this digging hole and cut trees. Monrovia male

If you mine in this community, the water in this community will not be fine. And very good water is colorless, tasteless and odorless. When you smell water then it means that water is not fine, it is polluted. So mining destroys the community when it comes to water system. Rural Montserrado County male

When it comes to trees felling affecting the community, you fell the tree and it falls in the water and then the leaves that in the water keep the dirt in there. Then people are drinking that water downstream so it affects the community. Rural Montserrado County male

Yes, like in my village the creek we use to drink was big but because they are cutting the trees, the water decreased. The water gets dry and we are looking for water all over to drink. Rural Montserrado County female

Cutting down the logs in various forests can hinder those that have their houses without trees. Cutting down logs for the for coals has brought great change to the community. Sometimes when heavy storms come, people house's just go away because of the heavy storms. Lofa County male

Some Participants Report Benefits From Extraction Activities, Particularly Road Building and Education

At times, when the engineers come, they will ask the people of things that they will need or things that they will want to benefit from. Some people will say we want our roads grid, we want hand pump, we want school. So before the people start the mining they will start to meet the needs of the community people. Rural Montserrado County male

My community can benefit from it when the company comes. That's why we are in support of the company coming. Gbarpolu County male

It can help the citizen to benefit, if they come like this to the town chief and say oh we want to go to so-so and so area and saw there. They sit down they can sign the amount they supposed to reach when it reach the amount, then they can use it for the internal purpose for the town. Lofa County female

They [concession holders] build roads. Lofa County male

Yes, in my own personal view, I believe that the community is benefiting. In the past few months, I heard that Nimba County was getting, I don't know how many machines, to do road construction in those various communities and things so that people can have good access to go and do their various things. Nimba County male

Yes like for BHP Billiton, they are really providing some facilities when it comes to scholarship and providing for other students who have graduated who are not able to help themselves to be taken to colleges and things and in other high schools around here. So these are things they are involved with. Nimba County male

In my community people do mining there. There is a agreement between those mining people and the community people so that they benefit. Grand Kru County male

However, Most Believe Others, Particularly Politicians, Benefit Far More From Their Community's Natural Resources Than They Do

For instance maybe they have to take some logs from there, in that forest. Those people that are responsible for that forest they will charge them a certain amount, certain percentage to be given to people, the owner of the town. They say since that's two hundred, let's share it equally and the people will agree to it and the town people will benefit. But sometimes the town people don't benefit. They lie to them and go. Grand Gedeh County female

In our community it doesn't benefit us in any way. That's certain group of people it benefiting and those people that benefiting are not from the community. Grand Gedeh County female

Those who are in the higher position are benefitting from the natural resources of our country. Because when companies come here and take the natural resources out, when they come here and buy it and send the money, you find out that those who went there to negotiate with the people benefit. Monrovia male

Our lawmakers benefit from it. I say the lawmakers because they can go and make this bill, unknown to us. They only select people who they know are in their interest who will say yes to whatever they will tell them. So all the benefit can go to them instead of the community. Gbarpolu County male

I will say we are benefiting nothing. We have minerals but the outsiders will come and take our minerals way. Let's say investor will come and invest in our resources. When the time comes we will only hear that he took it. We do not get anything from our own resources. Monrovia male

SDA came here where we found the tig. They planted tig here so many years ago, and the community was supposed to benefit from it. And they just cut the tig. The Putu Company is working here but Zwedru is not benefiting from it. When we talk about some of the benefit, we have local community college here now. They say they are building school for us, but the elementary school is better than the school they building now. We are not benefiting from it. Grand Gedeh County male

The people who can go dig the gold are the ones who benefit. They go work to iron ore, they work they pay them and they pay them big-big money, they are enjoying. Nimba County female

For me, I think that's the government getting benefit from it. Because even if the citizens or the people in that particular place that have resources, they don't even benefit from it. For example, those who are living in Yekepa, the road from here Yekepa is not even paved. So the government only sit sup there and then they receive the brown envelop and give the people allowance to go ahead and do the work. Nimba County male

Some Nimba County Participants Say Outsiders Are Benefiting More From Resource Extraction than They are

People from different-different counties are working here. Different-different countries: Ghana, Nigeria even from Ivory Coast. They are the ones enjoying because we the black people we not like each other.
Nimba County female

They don't want lay eye on Liberians that know something to be there. Nimba County female

In Kokoyah area there are diamonds and gold that white people are working there. Nimba County female

We are not getting the benefit because our husbands are not working. They are sitting down.
Nimba County female

When it comes to natural resources I got a serious problem with the people. The foreigners are benefiting in a sense that even you go to LAMCO right now, you will find out that many Ghanaians are working with LAMCO. How many Liberians? You will not even find more than 100 plus Liberians working.
Nimba County male

A Few Men in Some Counties Worry Conflict Could Arise Over Mining or Logging

Like the illicit miners that are here working and we do not know about them but we only see them mining and we are not getting any benefit, like even to build infrastructure. Nothing like that so when we get ready we will ask them to leave. If not, then conflict will start from right there. Gbarpolu County male

I made mention about conflict. That's some of the issues that will bring conflict. Because I can't get to my forest. Grand Gedeh County male

Yes, it happened in Bong county, there was a company that came to work there and they did not make an agreement with the people who are living there before. When the young people asked why they don't have benefits, we tried to ask them to revisit the agreement and they said no because the company knows that all is in their interest. So this can also bring conflict. Gbarpolu County male

Yes if these things continue to happen, especially for these cutting down logs, because for us on this side it has brought lots of discussion wherein people complain of those that live in those communities wherein people are cutting down the logs without giving them necessary incentives. If they don't receive what they are supposed to receive, they will sometime stop the people or either talk to the people so that they cannot go into the bush; that all those things can bring conflict. Lofa County male

Participants Expect to Have Input on Decisions About Natural Resource Allocation and Lament Uncontrolled Use

Yes, as for the natural resources, everybody is doing their own thing here. Most especially in this mining area. You and I can leave now and go to any of these gold camps. We will start digging gold. No control over it to say so, so, so percent, you know, responsible to go to the local authority for so, so, so development. Grand Gedeh male

On the natural surroundings, you know we have lot of things here. For instance, we have the forest surrounding us. We got forest here. But we are waiting for the company to come. You know, but I observe certain times, there's a company that came here and at the end of the day, the company did not do anything, they only took our logs and there is nothing the people did here. Okay, we got our lawmakers in Monrovia there, they once signed the contract between the company and the citizens. So we expect them in signing the contract, your going there to do so, so, and so thing for the citizen. But there was nothing. The people they will just come here at the end of the day, they carry our log and we will not get anything from them. Grand Gedeh male

You know people can benefit from the resources like the minerals that we have in this country. Since there is not good control, those guys who are mining are the ones that benefit from it. Grand Kru County male

By right, we should benefit. Simply because the government is responsible for effectual things. The land, employment and what have you. But they are not doing it. So they just there, sometimes they get it out, carry it to another country, give it out and do anything with Liberian people money. So the community themselves are not benefiting from their natural resources. Monrovia male

Because for one fact, before you send a logging company in my area, it should be through a channel. You get the superintendent, you get the town chief, we get the district commission. All those people should have influence. They should know what those logging company actually are coming to do in my community. Grand Gedeh County male

We ourselves are supposed to decide, working along with our representatives and senators. Gbarpolu County female

My brother, let me be frank with you. You know, I see the people coming from up there and then going into their bushes to do what they want to do. For me I don't know. But according to them they say they signed agreement with the government. So we the citizens are not informed. Grand Gedeh County male

Some Lofa and Nimba County Participants, However, Say They Hold Town Meetings and Rely on Government Guidance on Resource Decisions

Sometimes the community head calls a town hall meeting wherein the youths, elders, everybody will gather there. Then you bring up the issue and everybody will bring up their suggestions how people will use the resources. Lofa County male

The first thing, you call meeting. When you call meeting, then you give question to your community member. How we going to live, what we going to do it? When they agree, then they give their own view. Lofa County male

They've got a certain group that they can just select to go, concerned women. Sometimes we can hear the meeting over the air. Nimba County female

First when it started they never allowed people to go and give their views but when this speak your mind came and youth leaders went there and tell them what they didn't like. Nimba County female

For me the reason we are inviting the government to be there is, the government is there to be our guide. Because in case of anything, the government is there to protect us. Even though we the community members have plan to say this is how we want to use our resources. Lofa County male

The young people them can talk about it . They too can go. They put it over air. Nimba County female

Participants Say Many Different Bodies Have Say in How Social Development Funds Are Spent

Lawmakers

Town/County
leaders

Big-Big People

Village chiefs

Superintendent

Mayors

Community Leaders

Who Currently Has None?



Ordinary People

“The citizens should be the ones to decide because they live in the place. They know what they want so they will be in a better position to tell you what they want and what are some of the things they lack and what they need.”

Lofa County female

Local People Should Get to Decide How Funds Are Spent

The people who are supposed to decide are the people of the county. The various communities must be represented on this board so that they all have something say. This is how this money supposed to be spent, and when these people come back, they will be able to tell their people when we went for this meeting, this is what we said, and when we do it like this, it will benefit us. Lofa County male

The citizens will be in the right position to decide because they know what they want. They know the things that are in the community and the things that they do not have but the central or local government may not know about. Lofa County female

Yes I think the community people got to come together because everybody has their own view. So all the community people can come together then the person who is in charge of the money, tell the people say to this is the money the people gave us, so how should we use the money? Then the community people will give their view. Then you can vote by majority rule. Nimba County male

The citizens should set the boil. Because they know what will be good for their citizens and which of the development projects that will benefit the entire citizen of that county. Grand Gedeh County male

The community people. Because they have it and they know what they want. It is for their benefit but what we're talking about somebody that will hold unto it and make sure that it be used the right way that's all. Grand Gedeh County female

The community people because we are the ones living in the area. We are the ones who know what we are passing through. Rural Montserrado County female

The community people. I say this because they know what they want and what will benefit them tomorrow. For example in Henry Town, they are having a concession agreement there. The people in Monrovia sit and decide for them the way, not knowing the right thing to do. But we here know what we don't have here. Gbarpolu County male

Local Governments Should Collect Social Benefit Funds for Local Benefit



“I say it’s the local government because they are people that we interact with every day so they know our problems.” Rural Montserrado County male

Some in Grand Kru and Grand Gedeh Are Concerned About Local Corruption in Fund Collection, However

Yes, we will select a different person from somewhere else because the person has to be afraid to eat another people's money. Among us when we appoint someone he will eat the money. Grand Kru County male

When it comes to Social Development Funds people like us don't know anything about it. Like the example I was giving people use our yellow machine here and we don't know what they do with the money, and when it come to that one, government can't take over. Grand Kru County male

In fact, in a community, there are educated people but there's a head over that community. So the educated people should preside over it and they will know how to use it. But those same people we get up there, they are the ones when they one when they hank their head, they share their brown envelope then it is finished. Grand Gedeh County female

Participants in all Counties think Social Development Funds Should Be Spent on Roads, Schools, Health and Sanitation/Water

Grand Gedeh

Roads
Hospitals
Schools

Lofa

Playgrounds
Market
Roads
Sanitation
Hospitals
Schools

Nimba

Roads
Schools/training institutes
Hospitals/clinics
Water pumps

Grand Kru

Schools/Vocational training
Drinking water/sanitation
Hospitals

Monrovia

Schools
Hospitals
Infrastructure (sanitation, water)
Palaver hut

Rural Montserrado

Roads
Schools
Palaver hut

Gbarpolu

Roads/Bridges
Water/Sanitation
Schools

NRM Message Strategy Recommendations

- It will be critical for NRM activists to explain in the simplest, clearest words exactly what is meant by key terms including natural environment, natural resources, concession agreements and social development funds. Awareness of and definitions of these terms varies greatly according to region and education levels. Some participants were conversant and aware, others were aware after the terms were explained, others were unaware entirely. Do not assume activists and citizens share the same points of reference.
- The perceived connection between logging and mining activities and drinking water presents an opportunity for NRM to connect extractive industry impacts directly to Liberian's daily lives. By helping Liberians understand the connection between drinking water and extractive industries, NRM activists can benefit from association with the most salient issue facing most Liberians: the quality of their drinking water.
- While natural resource extraction is a known cause of climate change, Liberians are not yet directly making that connection. They are aware their climate is changing, but do not yet blame extractive industries. There are easier and more salient connections to make, such as the relationship between resource extraction and declining drinking water quality.
- While natural resource allocation is a known driver of conflict, most participants do not, at this time, view it as a potential flashpoint. Other causes, such as high prices or lack of economic opportunity, are seen as more likely. Therefore, NRM should avoid using this message to communicate with ordinary Liberians about the need for greater transparency and fairness in extractive industries.

NRM Message Strategy Recommendations Cont'd

- Local control over decisionmaking and local input for social development fund use are critical. Most participants want local government to collect and guide the spending of funds, but some in counties, participants fear corruption.
- Participants want social development funds from resource extraction to be used to solve communities' most pressing problems, sanitation and water among them. Connecting funds derived from a community's natural resources to solving some of its biggest problems (water and sanitation) is an easy cooperation mechanism between two of NDI's civil society partners.

NRM Messaging

More Effective Messages

Uncontrolled logging and mining is affecting drinking water quality

Communities rich with natural resources should have a say in how those resources are used

Communities, in cooperation with local government, should have say over how social development funds are spent.

Social development funds should be spent on the most pressing problems facing Liberian counties: education, roads, health care and water and sanitation

Less Effective Messages

Logging is causing in climate change

Poor management of natural resources can result in a return to conflict

Women Generally Are Less Aware of Concession Agreements and Social Development Funds

It Will be Necessary to Explain Exactly What is Meant by These Terms and Provide Examples

Higher Awareness of Concession Agreements

Gbarpolu County men
Rural Montserrado County men
Monrovia women
Monrovia men
Grand Gedeh County women
Lofa County women
Nimba County women
Nimba County men
Grand Kru women

Lower Awareness of Concession Agreements

Gbarpolu County women
Rural Montserrado County women

Higher Awareness of Social Development Funds

Gbarpolu County men
Rural Montserrado County men
Monrovia women
Monrovia men
Grand Gedeh County women
Nimba County men
Grand Kru women

Lower Awareness of Social Development Funds

Gbarpolu County women
Rural Montserrado County women
Lofa County women
Lofa County men
Nimba County women

Key Issue Three: Women's Activism



NDI
December 2013

Key Issue Three: Women's Activism

- Men and women alike praise Liberia's progress on women's rights. Many point out how far women have advanced in terms of empowerment, education and the fight against rape. It is a source of pride for many of both genders.
- Whether or not women's voices should be heard in public debate has been answered in Liberia with a resounding yes. Now, more than ever, women's voices are heard by government. More critically, Liberians in general believe their voices are not heard by their government. The problem is not limited to women.
- The President's influence on women's rights and empowerment cannot be understated. She alone is credited with bringing women's rights to the forefront of policy debate and for forcefully advocating for women's access to education.
- President Sirleaf is not the only positive female role model in Liberia. Participants in officeholders in Nimba, Lofa and Grand Gedeh Counties and Monrovia point to effective, respected female officeholders who are respected, listening to their constituents and working hard on behalf of their communities.
- It is not necessary to convince Liberians of either gender that women's voices should be heard at all levels of government. Whether in the home, the community or the market, women are seen as having insights on all types of development and economic issues that are valuable and worth heeding.
- Despite having a strong female mayor, women in Grand Gedeh complain that traditional leaders tend to exclude women from important meetings in which community decisions are made. They find this unacceptable.

Key Issue Three: Women's Activism, Cont'd

- Men and women alike say the main obstacles to female participation in public life include a lack of education, confidence and/or interest, their husbands or their busy lives prevent them, or that they are never asked for their views.
- There is no gender difference in likelihood of supporting female candidates: both men and women say they are open to voting for qualified women. Some say they prefer women. President Sirleaf has made the idea of a strong female elected officials fait accompli, rather than something that needs to be sold to a skeptical electorate. Very few men said they would not vote for a woman.
- There is a slight gender divide on a proposal to require all elected offices to be at least 30% women. Few opposed the idea outright. Indeed, it is quite popular. Many men and women alike thought 30% was too low. Some men were hesitant to support more than 30% quotas, however.

Men and Women Alike Praise Liberia's Progress on Women's Rights, Protection and Education

I also love the way they've brought girls support and women support. Lofa County female

For me, the good thing that is really happening in Liberia that I am happy with is women's education. Lofa County female

Women are taking part now in every organization. You will find women part of it. Grand Kru County female

Well for me, what really I'm looking at is women rights. Women have rights in the country. Monrovia male

The only thing I'm happy for in this country is that the Old Ma [women] is doing well for. If anybody rapes you, they go to jail. Before if you were raped nobody was there to take action. Monrovia female

Yes, one of the good things that I like about Liberia presently is women empowerment has been established. Before, women had not been counted. All responsibilities in the home had only been resting on the shoulder of the men. But thank god now the women are able to come together to support the home. Lofa County County male

Some of the things that this government is doing is that they are trying to protect the lives of the women, when it comes in terms of rape, and also child protection. These are things that the government is doing. Rural Montserrado County male

And one of the things government is doing that I like is gender equality. Men should get their rights and women get their rights. Rural Montserrado County male

One of the good things I see the government is doing is not taking sides with rape cases. Before it used to be discussed only in a family way but this time we are not seeing it any more so I am very excited about that. Rural Montserrado male

Women get a voice now, and at least women can take part in elections, but before it was not happening. Gbarpolu County female

Female education is to the top. We are learning, we are not scared to go to school, school is our main priority. We can speak out now, so there are many good things that are happening in this country that we really appreciate, especially on the line of education. Grand Kru County female

I will say yes and the reason is that from the beginning women have been marginalized and they are trying to empower them. Now the government is paying more attention to women. They don't want to remain marginalized. Lofa County male

Now, More Than Ever, Women's Voices Are Heard in Government, a View Shared by Women and Some Men

Do you think that the government pays attention to the needs of women, or not?

I will say yes because all the big-big offices we see here are being occupied by women, like for example the Minister of agriculture is a woman, the telecommunication minister is a woman and plenty of other ministries I can't name all now. Gbarpolu County male

Yes. If your husband treats you badly and you take it to the police, to the local police that are at the station, it's different. But if you take it where you are supposed to take it, you will see something. I see women praising the government for that. You see the Gender Ministry. When a man treats you badly, they can satisfy you. Monrovia female

In the government women have 75% rights and they are supported 75%. When it comes to employment, women are also employed and empowered. Grand Kru County male

The government over the years has created awareness to the extent that when you meet a native woman in the deepest part of the forest, she knows her rights. Grand Gedeh County female

Two things that the government has done for women really touch me. The first thing, when you see about four persons in an office, about three women will be among them. So women never used to have jobs, now they have gender equality. This is good. And the family planning they brought about, it's opening everybody's eyes. Grand Gedeh County female

She sometimes comes and asks the market women what they want her to do. The market women got together and told her they want market hall and she built it. Nimba County female

Right now some of the good-good things that are happening is that, a woman takes part, a man takes part in everything. For example, way back when woman says they want go to school or they want become president, or they want do this, then man could put a stop to it. But now, women can take part in everything, down to town hall meetings. Women didn't used to take part; but now, women can take part. Grand Kru County female

The superintendent and police commander here is a woman, then we having various districts. Some districts in this county have women superintendents. So they are helping us, the government is doing well in that line. Grand Kru County female

President Sirleaf's Influence on Women's Empowerment Cannot Be Understated

When women are elected as president, they can work well with the government. Because even when you're president, you can tell the people to do this. We the men, we are very corrupt we're not straight, the women are more straight than the men. Lofa County male

Like what Bro. Martin was saying about our current president, some countries and Taylor were not in good rapport. But since she came and she's a lady and she's president of this nation. When she goes to advocate somewhere, that person will see reason because that person will see her like mother to us. So women are very, very significant in those positions. Rural Montserrado County male

I will vote for a women candidate simply because of Madam Sirleaf although she is not really performing to the expectation. But we can't say because she underperforming so another person come we say no to them who knows? So I can vote for women candidate. Monrovia male

This is the very first female president we've ever have in Liberia. This is the first lady who maybe she was very strong and she was calculating on her decisions. She said I will stand by my decision and I will do what I am supposed to do. Nimba County male

Our president Madam Ellen Johnson Sirleaf tells you woman are very important. You can come talk to a woman. You do this, you do that, the only thing she will do she will go in her house and think about what next to do. That woman is very calm. Monrovia female

That Ellen. Ellen's doing her own but the men are not giving her a chance. All the things we doing today, Ellen wants good things to come to the women. Gbarpolu County female

Women and Men Point to Other Positive Examples of Women in Office As Well

When a woman takes control, that place will be in a good position. You see this school, SDA on Camp Johnson Road? When Lucilia Carter was a principal there, that school was tight, but since she left that school it has gone loose. Monrovia female

Women are in elected positions like our former representative, Rebecca Kelon. When she was there, she came down. When the citizens told her to do something although she did not do it all, she tried her possible best to do some. Nimba County male

Even though all women are not the same, most of them do well, they perform well. Like for example the former Monrovia city mayor, Mary Broh, she really did well. Nimba County male

Because women are straight; when they say this that what they mean. An example is our City mayor in Voinjama here; she's doing her best to keep our City clean. Lofa County female

Our women here can make things happen, for example our superintendent. Last month one woman went missing, but because she was strong in the way she talked and the way she handled the people they were able to find the woman. The woman spent 12 days in the bush without eating but now-now that woman is alive. Grand Gedeh female

We have woman as mayor. We have man as a superintendent. But if you weigh both sides the woman is doing better than the man. She's carrying on the work that she supposed to do for the city and almost half of the city is pleased with the work she's doing. She gave Zwedru a facelift, she makes sure that people are in the street cleaning. Grand Gedeh County female

Our mayor, when she decides to run in the elections to become a representative or senator, we will vote for her because she's city mayor and we see the development she's carrying on. So if she takes different position, she will do something better. Grand Gedeh County female

Participants Expect Women's Voices To Be Heard When Any Kind Of Decision is Made

Ninety-five percent should be paid to women because we the one in the house, we going through it. For the men, when they wake up in the morning, they just take bath, they go to work. When they come back in the evening, all they want to see is food, water. Gbarpolu County female

Women's voices should be included in all, because when it come to development they are good on that. Gbarpolu County male

Yes it matters a lot. What men can do, we can also do the same things. Men can farm, I can farm. A man can burn coal, I can burn coal. A man can go to school. I can go to school too. Rural Montserrado County female

Yes, it matters a lot because women too are important. Like before we used to downplay women we never used to have respect for them but women too are important and women too have voice of command and when they speak their voice can be heard too more than men. Rural Montserrado County male

Yes women's voices must be heard everywhere. We talked about decisionmaking, we talked about the social funds, women's voice must be heard. They gave birth to their children and their children are within the community and their voice must be heard to give some weight to whatsoever the men then will be saying. Rural Montserrado County male

The first thing is that women, we are special creation. That's one of the first things. Woman plays a major role in everything, in every home, everywhere. When the man is not there the woman is there, she will represent the husband. Monrovia female

If you go in the market how many men do you find there? When it comes to business, you find women there. Monrovia female

My community hears women's voices because each time they call community meeting, we find women going there to represent their home. So each time they speak, they are part of us. Monrovia male

Women need to talk at every meeting be it development or not anything about the community. It should all be the women business. Don't stop them from talking because their idea can also help us. Grand Kru County male

Woman issues are very very important because women know the important parts of the community, even in the government. Because if you used to give your woman L\$200.00 for food money now when you even make it L\$300.00 it will not be enough. She's the one who knows the hard part and the soft. We are always taking part in everything. Grand Kru County female

It matters to us because as women, some women have better ideas, better than the men. So if you try to put forth your idea and somebody buys it, then you feel happy. But if your talking about something that is essential and somebody looks at it and downplays it, you feel hurt because you know that exactly that what that person is doing is wrong. Grand Gedeh County female

Is very important that women voices are always heard. There are some women that have idea even more than the men. Lofa County male

Old Habits Die Hard in Grand Gedeh Where Women Complain About Being Excluded By the Old Gaurd

We don't have much say there. Because we couldn't be included and in those days it was tradition. Men can't be discussing when women are there. But with this government now women know their rights. It's not still effective.
Grand Gedeh County female

They're finished doing it before they come and tell us. The men discussing don't call the women. They can say "we are in our meeting, we won't call women. It's only men who are supposed to hear it." Grand Gedeh County female

They have the meeting, and when they read a time they will say "ok, the traditional people will talk, so no women." They will not allow women to bring ideas. Grand Gedeh County female

We women are supposed to have a say but they don't include us. Before we go look, they're done breaking down everything. The reason is that we are women and we are not holding together. But if we were holding together as group and speak in one voice, they will know that something is supposed to happen.
Grand Gedeh County female

Obstacles to Women's Participation

Ignorant ideas

Lack of
Language Skills

Busy

Lack of
Education/
Information

Not Asked, Called Upon or
Given Permission

Low Self Esteem

Not interested

Husbands

Fear/lack of
confidence

Women and Men Alike Would Support Women Candidates for Office

It very important because each time women talk, men listen. So actually, it is important.

But you and myself, when we go somewhere and we talk, people will look at us like something but woman get there and they talk, people will listen to them. Grand Gedeh County male

The man, them frustrate us plenty so small girl self, you come here. We will stand behind you. Gbarpolu County female

For me, I prefer the women because women are straightforward. Lofa County female

They are important in a sense that women can open doors. The places man can't reach, women can easily penetrate. So it will be good that they be in the government sector, there are places that they will speak that their voices will be heard as compared to men, so they are good to be in the government too. Rural Montserrado County male

If the woman is qualified and she can deliver the goods I don't have problem. Rural Montserrado County male

We will vote for her [female candidate] because when we vote for her, she wins and she will do the things we want. Monrovia female

Yes I will vote for a woman and I will like for a woman to be president because a woman will think about the children. A woman will think about the way to take care of your man at home so it means that you can be able to handle any group. Grand Kru County female

A Few Men Say they Will Not Vote For Female Candidates

No, because when you vote for them they can only focus on women; like here in the school they can only bring food for the girls children and leave the boys out. Gbarpolu County male

For me I will say no [won't vote for a woman] because we voted for one and put her in there now. We are feeling it, what she's doing to us.
Monrovia male

Well in the home, I will not like for my women to spearhead me because I the man. I will always like to spearhead her for the matter of fact. I will prove to her that she my wife. I will always take good care of her but not her to be on top of me. There's no way women can be on top men, impossible. All men rule women. Monrovia male

There's a Gender Divide on the Proposed 30% Gender Equality Law, Though Many Participants Favor it

Women Tend to Think it Should Be Higher, as Do Some Men

Positive

It's low. At least when they make it forty, it will be alright. Gbarpolu County female

I have problem with it. No I can't agree to it being 30% Now a days, you see, women, girls going to school, advancing themselves, going to Fendell campus, you will see lot of young girls. In case all those girls graduate tomorrow and decide to put their time to politics, should it be only few of them chosen and the others left over? I think it should be equal, it should be fifty, fifty. Rural Montserrado County male

Good idea. 30% is enough. Monrovia male

It is good and even better to be 30% because if it is 50% for some of us the one we seeing here in Barclayville is small because women are quick to fall. Grand Kru County female

We want 50%. Because over the years the men then that we voted for, we can't feel their impact. And women, the same way they can come to us we run their campaign, we ourselves are capable. And since we talk about gender equality, we don't want 30%, we want 50% and I am sure the women can do better than the men. Grand Gedeh County female

Yes, my brother, women should be 50%. The reason is that, woman have sympathy in them more than man. For Liberia now, if you have 50% woman in the government, I think things will be done well. Grand Gedeh County male

For me they should be more than 70, because they say ladies before gentlemen. Nimba County female

Negative

Women are not leaders! Because from the great days, even during ancient times, which one of the countries have you ever heard the president was a women in this world? The 12 disciples that was behind Jesus, did you hear a women's name? So you should think women are not supposed to be president! Gbarpolu County male

For me it is never a good idea and I don't want it to be passed. Gbarpolu County male

Yes, for me that particular bill is meant to bring division between men and women in the country so it should not be pass. They say gender equality meaning men and women are equal so why should they say 30%; let everybody go there and try their luck. When you're lucky you win, so there is no need to say let give this one to the women; so it mean if the woman is not qualified you will force her to go there? Gbarpolu County male

If you are a woman, and you are capable for a particular job, and you want the job, you and the man should go in the race. The same way the man is educated, the woman is also educated and she want that job. Both of them should go on equal level. Woman shouldn't have specific percent. Grand Gedeh County male

Grand Gedeh men: [nearly all opposed]

SEWODA Message Strategy

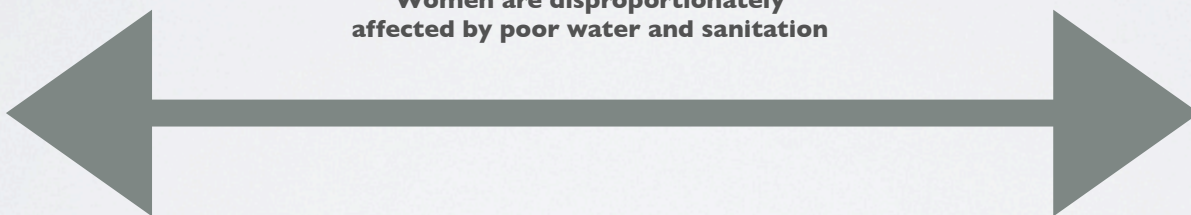
- President Sirleaf remains the most potent, respected and visible proponent of women's rights. To the degree possible, engage her as a messenger and advocate in all of SEWODA's activities. Other female officeholders in Nimba, Lofa and Grand Gedeh Counties and Monrovia are also viewed positively and should be engaged to assist with SEWODA's outreach goals.
- There is no need to get into a debate on whether women's voices should be heard in policy debates or whether they have valuable views to contribute. The issue has largely been settled in favor of women. The challenge will be the best way to engage and activate them (and men, as well) effectively.
- SEWODA should feel confident moving forward with a legislative proposal to require at least 30% of all political parties' candidates for government positions. It is popular and opposition to it is muted.
- Women in Grand Gedeh still face challenges from the old guard and run into barriers to participation in community decisionmaking. Grand Gedeh men are also most resistant to gender quotas. Despite popular female elected there, SEWODA still has some obstacles there.
- Women are disproportionately affected by poor water and sanitation. They have to clean up more, carry water farther and are perceived to be more affected by diseases caused by poor sanitation. Engaging them on this high salience issue will require little effort.
- Women are enthusiastic advocates for all types of community development issues, ranging from education to health care to sanitation to drinking water. They are eager to participate in town hall meetings, radio call ins and legislative tracking.

There is a Great Deal of Message Synergy Among NDI's CSO Partners On Water Issues



Women are enthusiastic advocates for water quality and community development issues

Logging and mining affects drinking water quality
Social development funds should be used to improve water and sanitation



Engaging Citizens and Encouraging Activism



NDI
December 2013

Engaging Citizens and Encouraging Activism

- A lack of input on issues that affect Liberian communities is not something that is limited to women. Both men and women feel that their voices are not heard on any issue. Very few report providing input on issues related to concession agreements, social development funds or any other topic.
- Participants strongly believe that they have a right be heard when matters related to their communities are being decided. They firmly believe their views should be taken into consideration by elected officials and should their views be ignored, as voters, they have the right to make a change.
- The NGO sector is generally positively viewed. Participants think NGO are generally effective, work on critical issues and can amplify citizens' voices at the highest level.
- Participants could name many different groups, which varied by region depending on where groups are active. NDI CSO partners are not well known. WASH and SEWODA were recognized by a few participants, after a prompt.
- Participants were enthusiastic about all suggested activism outlets, ranging from radio call-ins, town hall meetings, legislative tracking and meetings with lawmakers. They were eager to get involved in the most pressing issues facing their communities: education, water and sanitation, rural development, natural resource use, rape/women's issues and many others. They just have to be asked.

Engaging Citizens and Encouraging Activism, Cont'd.

- Radio “speak your mind” programs are popular because they give listeners, particularly those in remote areas, a chance to share their opinions and learn more about issues facing their community. If there are no costs associated with the call, most would be happy to call into such programs. Indeed, many regularly do already.
- Radio is the most reliable source of information. Some participants also rely on friends and family, youth, organized forums and traditional leaders to learn more about issues. A few use the internet, television or newspapers.
- Participants seek more information on a variety of issues, including those discussed during the focus groups (water and sanitation and natural resources, concession agreements and social development funds). They also would like more information about county budgets and development funds, public meeting schedules, labor issues and scholarships.

Most Participants -- Male or Female -- Do Not Feel Their Voices Are Heard on Any Issue

Who is able to go to government and say something about natural resource business? The only thing is for us to sit down and listen.
Monrovia female

We have power but the people will not even allow you to reach to them to go express yourself. They will not allow you, because they don't want see you. They say you area common person. Grand Kru County female

Sometimes the community leader can bring it out, sit down and discuss it fine. But they have to go high up and they just close their mouth. They stop from saying what they're supposed to say. Monrovia male


Really they don't have the idea. People that suppose to talk about that in the community, most of them don't visit the bush. To have a workshop sometimes, this is not going on. Grand Gedeh male

If they come to the street to get our view, we will be the happiest. Maybe God will make them pick one or two. If anybody asks us we will say "thank God." Monrovia Female

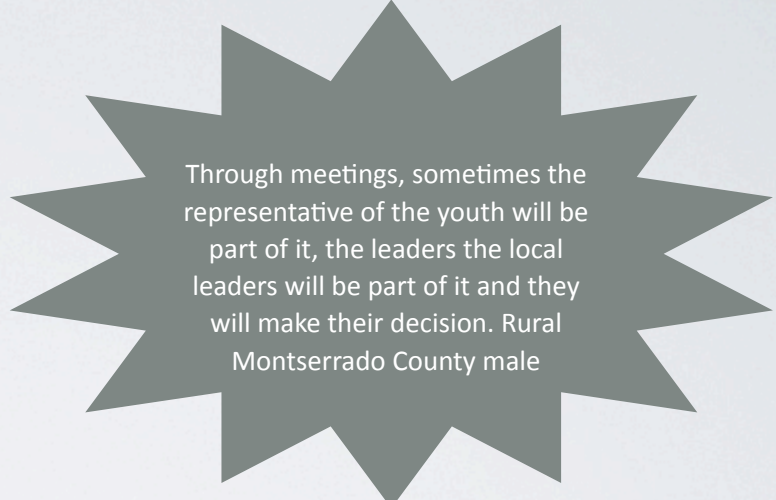
No meeting has been held. It can even be hard to see the lawmaker to talk about that kind of thing [natural resource use]. Grand Kru County female

Nobody, only the big big people can talk about that there. Lofa County female

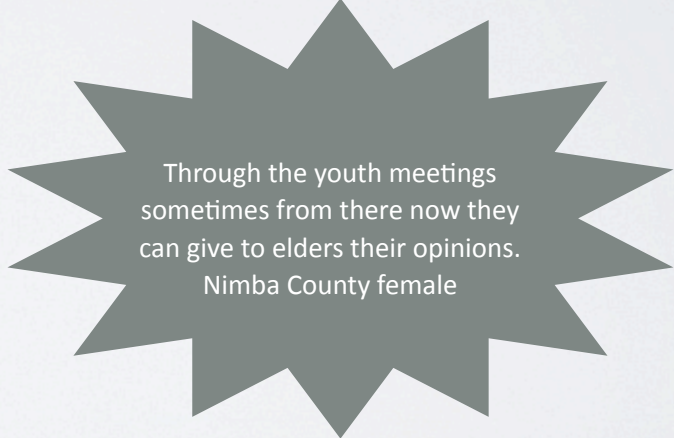
A Few Report Providing Input on Concession Agreements



As I understand, when the company is coming to the community like do mining and what have you, firstly before they come, they will meet the Superintendent, from the Sup, then they go the commissioner area, then the town commissioner, the Superintendent will go there and meet the people and say “these are people that are coming to mine in your community what do you people want these people to do for you?” Rural Montserrado County male



Through meetings, sometimes the representative of the youth will be part of it, the leaders the local leaders will be part of it and they will make their decision. Rural Montserrado County male



Through the youth meetings sometimes from there now they can give to elders their opinions. Nimba County female

They Do Believe, However, They Have the Right to Be Heard and the Power to Change Things

We the young people have power, but they don't listen to us. You know the power we have is the voting power; is like when we vote you in and you are not doing what we want you to do for us we also have the power to put you down and put different person there. Gbarpolu County male

Is very important that women voices are always heard. There are some women that have ideas even more than the men. Lofa County male

Yes, real life in every country, every citizen has power All these people that are in the House today, they depend on your vote but this when you give your view and they notice that you are nobody in the society they don't listen to you. Monrovia male

Yes, we have power and the greatest power I think we have is the voting right. Grand Kru County male

We the ordinary people, we have power. Some of the power that we have, we have the power to impeach the house of parliament. But the reason why we are not exercising those power is that we are not together. But when we come together as citizens, we have power more than those people up there. And what we say will come to pass. Grand Gedeh County female

I believe that if the ordinary people can be allowed in decision making, if their suggestions will change decisions. Lofa County female

Yes we have plenty because even those that up there [electeds], we are the ones that put them there. We are the ones that empowered them to go there. Without us they can't stay so we have power. Lofa County male

I think the changes that should be done in the country can be done by the citizens if only the government will listen to the citizens. Because the citizens know exactly what is affecting them, so if the citizens put forth their plight before the government and say these are things that happening in the country and is not really working in the interest of the country. If the government really listens to them, the government can make some changes. Nimba County male

The NGO Sector Receives Generally Positive Reviews

The NGOs have plenty power because when they come they talk to us like this then they go back and tell the government this is what the people say. Then the government will listen to you. Rural Montserrado County female

Yes, when it comes to national level, they sometimes advocate when it comes to what people need. They will advocate and they will work towards it for you and myself to receive it so they are sometimes important. Rural Montserrado County male

The NGOs have more power to extend the voice of the people because they are in the various communities and they are there and they are seeing things and they are speaking with the people, so they have more power to extend the voice(s) of the people. Rural Montserrado County male

They can help but sometimes it will not be enough. Monrovia female

NGOs have social power because when they come to your community they will ask you what are some of the problems you face with here. When tell them then they will go into the fund they have and start doing their work. So in short they have social power. Gbarpolu County male

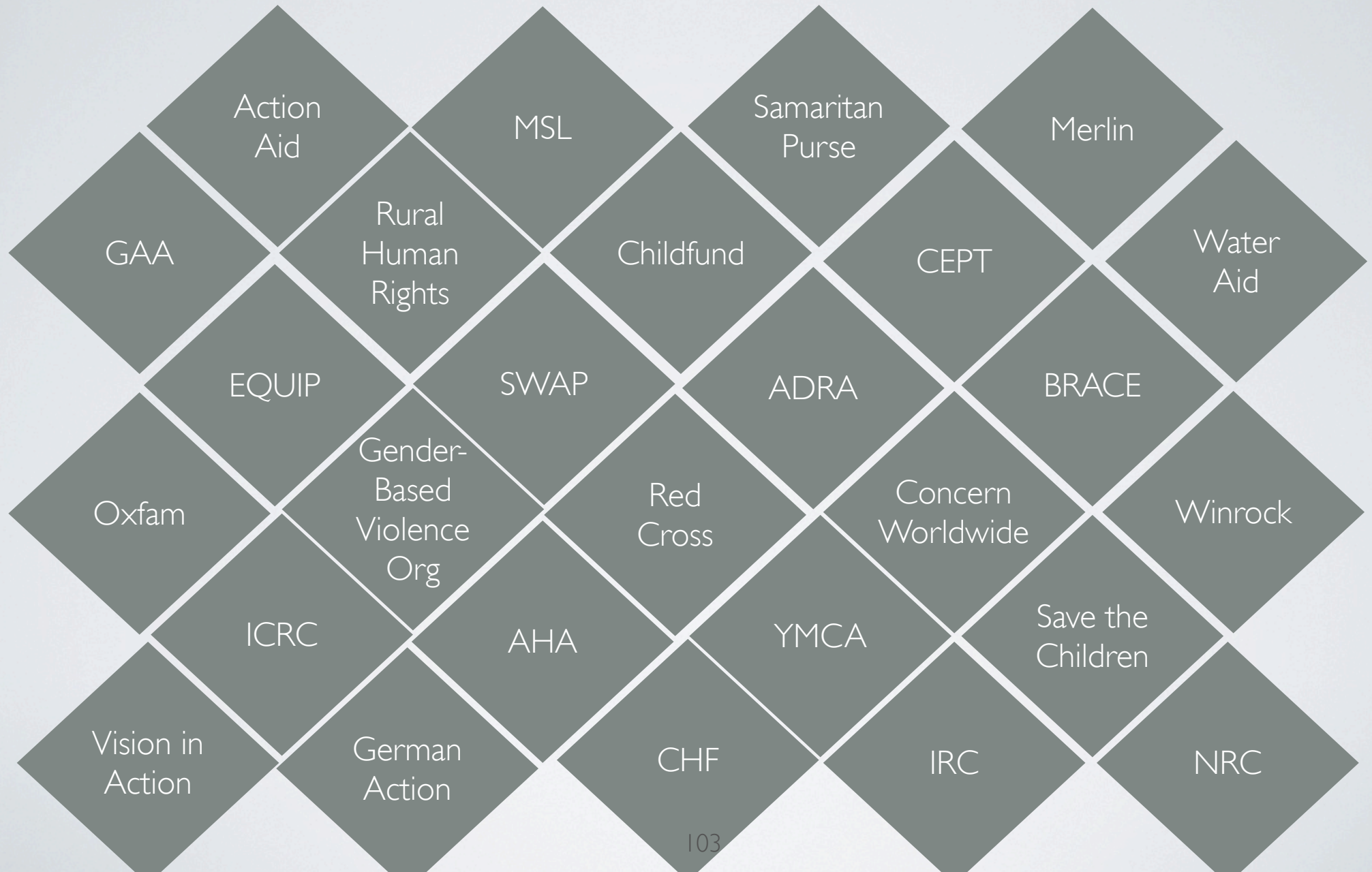
Yes because NGOs when they call a meeting or workshop they can call women and women can express themselves and as they express themselves, they forward the reports. Grand Kru County female

The NGOs have more power to help. Sometimes like for example you bring NGOs in this place here, people that working with them, they sent the request in, any development and things, they can help us to reach the head office. Grand Gedeh County female

Yes the NGOs have power, but not 100% power; the citizens and the government have to help them them to carry on whatever they want to do. Lofa County female

Participants Can Name a Number of NGOs

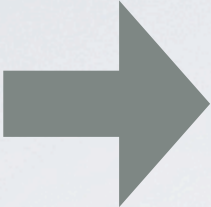
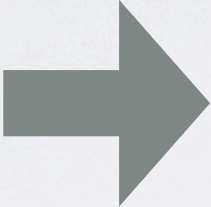
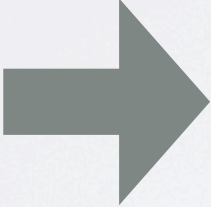
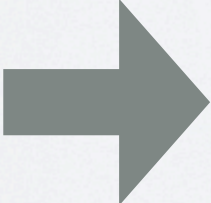
SEWODA and NRM Were Mentioned, After Prompting, in Grand Kru and SEWODA in Grand Gedeh



Participants Were Eager to Get Involved in All Issues Discussed, and More



Some Participants Raised Concerns About Some Activities

		Pros	Cons
Radio Call-Ins		Some prefer not to meet officials face-to-face or alone They already do it	Calls cost money No phones Perceived as ineffective
Call/Visit electeds			Calls cost money Only seen at election time Intimidating
Track legislative records			Inaccessible to regular people
Town Hall meetings		Nearly all willing to do	

Radio “Speak Your Minds” Provide a Useful Outlet for Listeners, Especially Those in Outlying Areas, to Air Grievances and Share Information

This speak your mind, it is all about burning issues that can be hidden. Those kinds of burning issues need to be heard publicly. So speak your mind is so that people can know what is burning in you that people need to find means to adjust themselves to it or either eliminate it or to help improve it. That will have benefits for other people. Nimba County male

There can be solutions because sometimes if you see the public media open for all citizens to give their views, the public administration has access to what they want. They might have the decision on their own to take it, but they want to share the views of the masses. Nimba County male

Yes sometimes solutions can come from some of the discussions that they have on the radio. Sometimes the big-big people are listening and they can help too. Nimba County female

For the radio shows because not everyone will be able to come here. But then it can be on the media. If you are in the villages, when you tune in to that station you will also be aware of what is happening so that is also fine. Lofa County male

For example let's just say like the police commander in the county, he may not get the chance to patrol all of Lofa county. But sometimes when people hear it on air that something is happening in a remoter area where there's no car road, then somebody will pick up phone and call the from there that so, so thing is going on around here. That information will meet them there, he will put men together, and they will find means how best to get to that place. Lofa County male

Yes we are listening to them and they are helpful for us. They make us hear some things that are far from us and make you to express your feeling too. Lofa County female

Yes we listen to them. Sometimes we get ideas about things that we not have ideas on before. People can discuss it to the fullest and from there we can learn. Grand Kru County female

Because one time the city major went on the air and made the announcement that the city is too dirty and from there the City cooperation started inspecting and everybody started cleaning their yard. Grand Kru County male

The station is there, anybody can play it to get information. If even if you do not hear it, somebody else will and tell you “say my man I heard you over the air, you were talking on so, so and so thing.” Rural Montserrado County male

And it also reminds leaders about their wrongdoings. If he or she is doing wrong, when they hear it, they say “o, these guys are on my back. I think I need to change my way of working in the community.” So it also brings change or changes within the community with the leaders. Rural Montserrado County male

Other Trusted Information Sources



NGOs



Friends and Family



Lawmakers



Youth



Amoyu Forum
(Zwedru)



Internet



Television



Traditional leaders
and chiefs

Participants Ask for More Information About a Variety of Policy and Practical Issues

What would you like to have more information about?

