

# Action for Rights and Social Justice



**ActionAid Liberia  
Country Strategy Paper III  
(2024 -2029)**

## Executive Summary

Action for Rights and Social Justice reaffirms ActionAid Liberia's position and agility in working with people living in poverty to take a cohesive stance on Social Justice, eradicating poverty, promoting gender equality, and ending inequality in Liberia. Since the end of the Liberia civil war in 2003, there have been peaceful successions from one democratically elected government to another with all promising to set Liberia on a path of prosperity. This has created opportunities for Liberians to create wealth, improve their social and economic security and dignity of life. Liberia is rich in natural resources and holds 50% of the remaining Upper Guinea Rainforest in West Africa which is an important hotspot for global biodiversity<sup>1</sup>, yet the country remains one of the poorest countries in the world. It is placed 175<sup>th</sup> out of 189 countries, with a gross national income per capita of US\$570 in 2020, and a poverty rate of more than 50 percent in 2016.<sup>2</sup> Liberians continue to witness the government's wide abuse of the country's national resources that are placed in the hands of the privileged few, corruption continues to be prevalent and is at its peak in the public service. The rule of law is continuously violated particularly by State actors, and the State itself as duty bearer. Successive governments have failed to close the gaps despite the irrefutable evidence of deepening poverty which exposes women and other marginalized groups to vulnerability including sexual, physical, and emotional violence.

Action for Rights and Social Justice defines AAL's dedication to fostering societal transformation towards social justice, equity, and sustainability over five years from 2024-2029. Central to this mission is empowering those made most vulnerable, especially young women and marginalized groups living in poverty and exclusion, to become agents of change in their own lives and communities. Drawing on our 25 years of experience, the new strategy revitalizes our efforts to redistribute power and resources, bolster community resilience, and uphold the rights of those in poverty and social exclusion.

Our overarching objective is to advance social justice, gender equality, and eradicate poverty through a focus on Rights, Redistribution, and Resilience. To achieve this, CSP III centers on three key program priorities:

- i. Address structural and systemic Gender-Based Violence against women, with a particular emphasis on young women and marginalized groups.
- ii. Promote democratic governance and accountability through inclusive civic participation, led by young women, to ensure gender-responsive public services and realize health and educational rights.
- iii. Build community resilience to adapt and mitigate the impacts of climate change and disasters, emphasizing climate justice, natural resource governance, agroecology, and sustainable livelihoods.

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<sup>1</sup> [The Republic of Liberia | West Africa \(usgs.gov\)](https://www.usgs.gov/locations/worldwide/information/german-geological-survey-german-geological-survey)

<sup>2</sup> Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS) (2016). Household Income and Expenditure Survey 2014- 2015.

In implementing CSP III, ActionAid Liberia will prioritize organizational development in the following ways:

- i. Strengthen feminist leadership throughout the organization through gender-sensitive policies and inclusive work environments.
- ii. Enhance organizational capacity and staff development through systems establishment and talent management.
- iii. Strategically harmonize/systematic use of project management tools, strengthen the expertise of technical teams, increase the evidence of the effectiveness of our work, and expand our geographical footprint to effectively respond to our programmatic and humanitarian interventions.
- iv. Cultivate innovative partnerships across sectors, academia, media, unions, community-based organizations, movements, and human rights defenders.
- v. Increase communications and visibility through online presence and engagement, as well as branding initiatives.
- vi. Ensure robust financial management and resource mobilization aligned with international standards and regulations.

Action for Rights and Social Justice underscores our commitment to strengthen internal systems and procedures to maintain a climate friendly work environment, reinforcing our interventions on SHEA and Safeguarding, advancement of women's leadership. We will collaborate with diverse stakeholders, including people living in poverty and exclusion, their communities, people's organizations, women's movements, groups and networks, representatives of local, district, and national government, development partners, and other allies. Guided by feminist and human rights principles, we aim to shift unjust power dynamics through empowerment, solidarity, advocacy, and alternatives, ensuring every person enjoys the right to a life of dignity, free from poverty and all forms of oppression.

## 2.0 Introduction

ActionAid Liberia (AAL) is a country program and part of the ActionAid Global Federation, a unique partnership of people, organizations and social movements working to achieve economic, social and climate justice, gender equality and poverty eradication. Throughout the world, ActionAid works to strengthen the capacity and active agency of people living in poverty and exclusion, especially women, to assert their rights. To align with the Global federation strategic implementation framework III, AAL commits to support a feminist, just and green transition and reinforce priorities on economic Justice.

### 2.1 The Journey so far

ActionAid Liberia was launched in 1997 as a cross border initiative by ActionAid Sierra Leone in response to the humanitarian crisis that emanated from the Liberian civil war. Since then, AAL has grown from a humanitarian assistance organization focusing on internally displaced people to a rights-based development organisation addressing socio - economic and structural inequalities of power, working with people living in poverty. Today, AAL is one of the leading and recognized organizations in Liberia focused on women's rights and gender equality.

ActionAid Liberia's first Country Strategy Paper (2013 -2017), **Engaging Power for Transformative Development**, focused on three strategic objectives: promoting the rights of women and girls, supporting the urban poor, especially young people to reduce their vulnerability; and the inclusion of the poor and excluded in decisions and policymaking processes. Under this CSP, AAL's programmes contributed to increased awareness of the rights of women and girls; the promotion of access to sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and services and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS; and policy advocacy for access to justice for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

The second CSP (2018-2023), **Action for Equality and Justice (CSP II)**, upheld AA Liberia's commitment as an ally to the struggles of women, young people, marginalized groups and communities living in poverty in Liberia for the fulfillment and protection of their fundamental human rights and freedoms. CSP II continued to apply a human rights-based approach and an intersectional feminist analysis to tackle entrenched patriarchal, cultural and religious beliefs promoting gender disparities, discrimination, sexual violence and economic marginalization of women, girls and sexual minorities. Under CSP II, AAL ensured that all its programmes contributed to one or more aspects of the four key priorities- Rights, Redistribution, Resilience and Emergencies- of AA's Global strategy, Action for Global Justice.

### 2.2 Developing the new strategy-Action for Rights and Social Justice

Action for Rights and Social Justice has been developed through extensive stakeholder consultation, situation analysis of Liberia's context and challenges and builds upon the work done as well as lessons learnt during the previous Country Strategy Paper II. The end line evaluation of implementation and impact of Country Strategy Paper II was undertaken by an external consultant. It included a series of engagements with staff and relevant stakeholders using participatory methods to ensure inclusion and participation.

The evaluation determined the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability of AAL programmes. Additionally, it assessed the extent to which AAL implementation had aligned with the

AA Federation Strategic priorities as outlined in the Strategy 2028 and Strategic Implementation Framework 2 as well as national priorities. A situation analysis offered insights on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that fed into development of CSP III.

### **2.3 Alignment to the AAI Global Strategy**

Action for Rights and Social Justice of AA Liberia aligns closely with AAI's 'Action for Global Justice' Strategy 2028 in which ActionAid is committed to globally strengthening social justice, eradicating poverty, and promoting gender equality, working with the most vulnerable and marginalized communities and with organizations, activists, social movements, and supporters.

Action for Rights and Social Justice response will be holistic and constructive, supporting a transition that is feminist, just, and environmentally sustainable. In relation to the Strategic Implementation Framework 2 (SIF2) which outlines two thematic priorities, alongside a reiteration of humanitarian and resilience efforts, forming three interconnected pillars of action contributing to this overarching transition.

Under System Change for Economic Justice, the Country Strategy Paper III aims to build the agency of young women, marginalized groups and social movements in challenging neoliberalism and its associated practices, advocating for progressive alternatives, and demonstrating the redistributive potential of gender-responsive policies and quality public services. This will advance economic justice and address the unequal burden of unpaid care work, facilitating investments in gender-responsive public services, particularly education and health.

Under System Change for Climate Justice, Action for Rights and Social Justice will focus on standing against powerful corporations and affluent nations accelerating the climate crisis. Through supporting resilient movements, redistributive mechanisms, and a green, feminist transition, Action for Rights and Social Justice will aim at addressing these injustices and build a more equitable future.

Under Humanitarian and Resilience Work, Action for Rights and Social Justice will focus on women led humanitarian response, prioritizing localization, accountability to crisis and disaster affected communities, and build long-term transformational community resilience.

### **2.4 Reflections and lessons from Country Strategy Paper II**

The interventions under CSP II achieved significant milestones in reducing violence against women and girls while promoting their access to Gender Responsive Public Services (GRPS). This progress is evidenced by the increased seriousness with which Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) cases are now reported by communities and support services available. This is thanks to successful localization efforts fostering community ownership and participation in decision-making processes.

Keeping women, young people, and marginalized groups at the centre of ActionAid Liberia's (AAL) work has yielded positive outcomes. This approach has not only boosted confidence but also created safe spaces for everyone to thrive with dignity and respect. AAL's humanitarian efforts, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, have played a crucial role in promoting women's leadership, extending to both women and young people and strengthening community structures, especially for marginalized groups.

Synergy with other partners and institutions has facilitated an increase in women's leadership, empowering them to advocate for their land rights. Communities involved in AAL projects are now better equipped to engage with the government on land issues, resulting in a notable rise in reported land rights cases and some women gaining land ownership. This heightened awareness has led to a strong movement advocating for the inclusion of women and young people in natural resource management.

The sustained impact of AAL's work is evident in continued activity among groups that received livelihood support, even after project closure. Additionally, communities have advocated for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services on their own, showcasing the lasting influence of AAL's advocacy efforts.

AAL has undertaken significant efforts to address the structural causes of violence against women, girls, and marginalized groups. Through strategies such as trainings, workshops, and participatory tools, AAL has raised awareness among women and girls regarding their rights and access to essential information on statutory laws. This includes empowering individuals to navigate the national referral program pathway and connect with relevant service providers.

Moreover, AAL has played a pivotal role in promoting women's economic justice by advocating for the recognition, and reduction of the unpaid care burden and increasing access to decent work. Training sessions and capacity-building initiatives have empowered women and young people to assert their claims for land rights and inclusive land governance, contributing to conflict prevention and peace maintenance.

Additionally, AAL has facilitated citizens' participation and demands for democratic and transparent governance, strengthened civil society and state institutions, and improved access to quality public education and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services. For example, in Gbarpolu County, allocation was made through the County Development funds for SRH services as a result of advocacy done by the Girls and boys forums; while young people in Bong County called out local authorities for the provision of gender responsive public services in the educational sector. AAL has worked to increase women and young people's leadership in natural resource management and governance, promote food sovereignty, and strengthen national women-led humanitarian networks for emergency response by working with the Women Humanitarian Network and young people structures at community, national and international levels. Through partnerships and advocacy, AAL has empowered communities to engage in decision-making processes, advocated for policy reforms, and address violations of their rights, resulting in tangible improvements in women's representation and participation in various sectors.

## **2.5 Who we are**

ActionAid Liberia (AAL) is a social justice organisation leading on women's rights and gender equality. We are known and recognized by government and communities we work with for our non-negotiable stance on women's rights and our focus on the most excluded in Liberian society. We have prioritized women's rights for over a decade and implemented anti-SGBV and SRHR programmes targeting women, girls and other discriminated groups (i.e., LGBTI persons, sex workers, and persons living with HIV). Past projects focused on reducing SGBV in schools; strengthening referral systems in communities for reporting of SGBV cases; and alternative livelihoods for female practitioners of FGM. AAL also supported campaigns and advocacy actions

for the Domestic Violence Act and FGM; pushed for violence free education and increased access to stigma-free comprehensive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. CSP3 builds on this history, takes advantage of the opportunities that opened up, and seeks to close some of the gaps identified in the evaluation and reviews of our programs.

## **2.6 Mission and Vision**

### **2.6.1 Our Vision**

A just, equitable and sustainable world in which every person enjoys the right to a life of dignity, freedom from poverty and all forms of oppression.

### **2.6.2 Our Mission**

To achieve social justice, gender equality, and poverty eradication by working with people living in poverty and exclusion, their communities, people's organizations, activists, social movements and supporters.

### **2.6.3 Our Values**

- Mutual Respect, requiring us to recognize the innate worth of all people and the value of diversity.
- Equity and Justice, requiring us to ensure the realization of our vision for everyone, irrespective of gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, race, ethnicity, caste, class, age, HIV status, disability, location and religion
- Integrity, requiring us to be honest, transparent and accountable at all levels for the effectiveness of our actions and our use of resources and open in our judgements and communications with others
- Solidarity with People Living in Poverty and Exclusion will be the only bias in our commitment to the fight against poverty, injustice, and gender inequality
- Courage of Conviction, requiring us to be creative and radical, bold and innovative - without fear of failure - in pursuit of making the greatest possible impact on the causes of poverty, injustice, and gender inequality
- Independence from any religious or party-political affiliation
- Humility, recognizing that we are part of a wider alliance against poverty and injustice.
- Feminist Leadership, positive and inclusive use of power to co-create an organization that contributes to transformational change.

## **2.7 Our context**

Globally, poverty remains prevalent, disproportionately affecting women and youth. Various factors contribute to this situation, including an uptick in natural and human-induced disasters, prompting donors to redirect funding from livelihood support to emergency aid. Additionally, governments worldwide, both in developed and developing nations, have embraced market liberalization, allowing the private sector to assume responsibility for delivering public services previously provided by the state. Consequently, the cost of accessing essential services has risen, deepening socio-economic disparities.

The political and economic configuration of Liberia has undergone transformative events over the last 50 years. Founded in 1847 by freed American slaves, Liberia was the first country in sub-

Saharan Africa to proclaim its independence. Because of its pioneering role in the wave of struggles for independence across Africa, Liberia has played a key and active role in international affairs. The country encouraged the establishment of Pan-Africanism and helped found the Organization of African Unity. However, much of the progressive and empowering role that Liberia played in the international arena was not translated into its internal political and economic situation.

Before 1989, political power was concentrated essentially in urban spaces with most infrastructure and basic services in the capital city of Monrovia and a few other cities, which fueled uneven development and resulted in a major disparities between urban and rural areas. In 1979, the country enjoyed a marked increase in economic growth due to a hike in world petroleum prices. However, with the 1980 coup d'état and later the onset of the first civil war in 1989, the economy collapsed and inflicted an especially devastating toll on the poor.

Liberia experienced its first civil war from 1989 to 1997, and the second from 1999 to 2003. The drivers of conflict were numerous, with underlying social and economic inequalities, paired with widespread corruption and nepotism, playing an important part.

In October 2005 Liberia elected Africa's First Female President under the framework established by the August 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Although one candidate, George Weah claimed fraud, the courts threw out his petition, and international observers, similarly, did not observe any significant irregularities. The 2011 presidential and legislative election was the first to be held under the 1986 constitution since the 1997 and 2005 elections were held under special legal dispensations. They were the first elections since the civil war to be organized by the National Election Commission (NEC). The elections were particularly challenging since they required constituency demarcation and the holding of a national referendum on August 23, 2011. Following a runoff election, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf emerged once again as the presidential victor<sup>3</sup>. Under the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf-led government, Liberia's economy grew from -30% in 2005 to 8.5% in 2013. However, due to the 2014 EVD crisis, Liberia's GDP dropped below 1% until late 2021<sup>4</sup>. During the same period, Liberia recorded an increase in SGBV, unemployment, and citizen protests. In 2018, Liberia recorded its first democratic turnover of power from President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to President George Weah. The Weah led government served for one term and was voted out due to numerous challenges ranging from bad governance, corruption, mismanagement of public funds, and a high unemployment rate. In 2023, Liberia had its second democratic power turnover from President George Weah to Joseph Boakai.

**The Gender Dynamic:** The World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that during the civil war, 82 percent of the female population was subjected to multiple forms of violence, while 77 percent experienced sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). The high incidences of sexual violence did not decrease after the end of the conflict and abuse rates remain critically high, while also affecting women's participation in the labour market to this day. However, women in Liberia are often involved in the informal economy and their participation takes place within a framework of various disadvantages, including the lack of financial opportunities to enhance their food security, nutrition, and income across the country. They also face barriers to accessing markets, credit, and resources to support their businesses and economic activities. Seventy-four percent of all female workers in Liberia are informal laborers, facing challenges such as a lack of access to credit and banking

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<sup>3</sup> Liberia democracy, human rights, and governance assessment [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00J16J.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00J16J.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>GDP growth (annual %) - Liberia <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?locations=LR>



services, limited financial literacy and business training, and few social protections or childcare options. Liberia is marked by traditional gender norms that are deeply rooted in the dynamics of social power relations. These norms are also connected to the larger structures of power in politics, economy, and religion, affecting women and girls' livelihoods and resilience-building activities to enhance food security, nutrition, and income.

**Food Insecurity, the Impact on Liberia:** Liberia has a conducive climate and good soils for crop production, but the country continues to suffer from food insecurity due to extreme poverty, gender inequality, and unequal resource allocation in the country's food and agricultural systems. According to FAO, approximately 18% of Liberian households were identified as moderately to severely food insecure in Liberia's last comprehensive food security assessment in 2018<sup>5</sup>. The severity of food insecurity in the country is exacerbated by the Ukraine-Russia conflict that has impacted global commodity prices, the still reverberating impacts of COVID-19, climate change, and high post-harvest losses. The 2021 Global Hunger Index classifies Liberia's level of hunger as serious. Liberia ranked 110 of 116 countries on hunger conditions. According to the most recent report, 'State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI)', released in July 2023<sup>6</sup>, the occurrence of malnutrition among Liberians remains alarmingly high at 38.4% (2020-2022). This figure signifies that approximately two million individuals in the country suffer from undernourishment, illustrating a considerable gap in achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 2, which aims to eradicate hunger by 2030. The recent Rapid Food Security Livelihoods Nutrition and Market Assessment (RFSLNMA, 2022) analysis report also shows that nutrition status in Liberia is at the "Alert/Stress" level, making the country vulnerable to further shocks<sup>7</sup>.

**Health:** Despite efforts to recover from the impact of civil wars, the Ebola crisis, and COVID-19, Liberia's health sector remains fragile. About 36% of Liberians and 58% of rural Liberians – who are also more likely to be poor households – live in remote areas beyond 5km away (or a one-hour walk) from any health facility.<sup>8</sup> These households disproportionately bear the burden of poor access to healthcare. According to Demographic Human S 2019-20 data, almost half of Liberian women report they had at least one problem in accessing healthcare, with rural women being more likely to have trouble accessing healthcare (59% rural vs 36% urban). About 36% of women report money for treatment being the main problem, followed by 28% of women reporting distance to a health facility. These barriers are even higher in rural areas, where 46% and 45% of women respectively report money and distance to a health facility as the main reason why they are unable to access healthcare.<sup>9</sup> Liberia is ranked as the country with the 6th worst maternal mortality rate in the world (772 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births).<sup>10</sup> Under five, infant, and neonatal mortality rates (76,

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<sup>5</sup> Comprehensive Food Security and Nutrition Survey, 2018

<sup>6</sup> The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023 (fao.org)

<sup>7</sup> UN Nutrition's Collaborative Efforts Intensify Liberia's Fight against Growing Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Challenges  
<https://www.fao.org/liberia/news/detail-events/en/c/1673916/#:~:text=The%20recent%20Rapid%20Food%20Security,country%20vulnerable%20to%20further%20shocks.>

<sup>8</sup> Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), Ministry of Health [Liberia], and ICF. 2021. Liberia Demographic and Health Survey 2013. Monrovia, Liberia and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), Ministry of Health, and ICF.

<sup>9</sup> Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), Ministry of Health [Liberia], and ICF. 2021. Liberia Demographic and Health Survey 2019-20. Monrovia, Liberia and Rockville, Maryland, USA: Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services (LISGIS), Ministry of Health, and ICF.

<sup>10</sup> LDHS 2019-2020

57, and 25 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively) are also some of the poorest among low-income countries.<sup>11</sup>

Poor health outcomes are exacerbated by insufficient and unequal coverage of essential health services.<sup>12</sup> According to Liberia's Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) 2019-20, 79.8% of women gave birth in a health facility and 79.5% of women reported a postnatal check within 48 hours of delivery.

Some underlying causes include inadequate and inequitable access to health information and services, weak health systems, non-implementation of existing health and related policies and plans, inadequate funding and human resources, weak infrastructure, uneven distribution of facilities and manpower, and poor quality of services amongst others.

**Education:** The education sector faces structural deficiencies such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers, and a high dropout rate, particularly among girls. Disadvantaged youth, especially those involved in conflict situations, present unique challenges, including substance abuse, posing a threat to their rehabilitation and integration into society. Increasing equitable access for girls and boys with particular attention to gender and regional disparities; improving the quality and relevance of teaching and learning and strengthening the education efficiency and management capacity remain the biggest challenges for the education system<sup>13</sup>.

**Environment and ecology:** Environmental vulnerabilities pose a significant threat, including deforestation, illegal logging, land disputes related to resource extraction, and the impacts of climate change. Issues related to access to clean energy, environmental regulations, community land rights, and dependence on international partnerships for climate finance add complexity to Liberia's pursuit of climate justice.

## 2.8 Opportunities and Synergies to build upon for CSP III

AA Liberia is presented with a multitude of opportunities, ranging from aligning with governmental priorities and global agendas to engaging the youth population and leveraging support from donors. Through strategic positioning within national networks and effective communication of its achievements, AA Liberia can not only secure funding but also wield influence amongst stakeholders and make substantial contributions to policy changes and positive social impact in the country.

Aligning with (the government), ARREST (Agriculture, Roads, Rule of Law, Education, Sanitation, and Tourism) Agenda provides AA Liberia with a strategic pathway to secure funding and enhance program relevance. The existence of supportive national frameworks fosters opportunities for collaboration and alignment with government initiatives. By focusing on emerging priorities such as climate justice, humanitarian crises, and issues related to land rights, conservation, and agro-ecology, AA Liberia can access international funding opportunities and contribute to addressing pressing global challenges.

The considerable youth population in Liberia serves as a valuable resource for AA Liberia, particularly in implementing initiatives concerning women's rights and youth empowerment.

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<sup>11</sup> World Bank, World Development Indicators, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> World Bank and Global Financing Facility. Liberia Expenditure Analysis, Evaluating Domestic Resource Allocation and Spending in the Health Sector, 2020.

<sup>13</sup> Liberia Education Sector Plan [https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/liberia\\_esp\\_2022.pdf](https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/liberia_esp_2022.pdf)

Engaging the youth population not only aligns with demographic trends but also contributes to the sustainability and impact of AA Liberia's programs. Additionally, AA Liberia's membership in national networks serves as a platform for enhanced collaboration and information sharing, thereby strengthening the organization's overall effectiveness.

The government's commitment to eradicating Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and providing paralegals for women's cases presents a unique opportunity for collaboration between AA Liberia and governmental bodies. By leveraging this commitment, AA Liberia can play a pivotal role in supporting governmental efforts and driving positive policy changes in the field.

Continued support from donors and international partners underscores a favorable environment for AA Liberia's initiatives. Capitalizing on this support can enable the organization to expand its programs and amplify its impact. Furthermore, donor interest in various areas, including climate change, agriculture, education, health, human rights and rule of law, good governance, natural resource management, and humanitarian response, presents diverse fundraising opportunities for AA Liberia. Collaboration with national structures and groups further enhances AA Liberia's capacity to effectively address these critical issues.

### **3.0 Our Programme Strategy**

#### **3.1 Our Theory of Change**

AAL believe that the attainment of social justice, gender equality, and the eradication of poverty will happen through purposeful individual and collective action to shift unequal and unjust power in all its forms (visible, hidden, and invisible) at all levels, spanning from the household to local, national, and international arenas. This will be through collective efforts and struggles when people are empowered, linked through solidarity, campaigning, people's organizations, social movements, citizen's groups, and other allies to strengthen the power of people to drive structural change. This transformation of power will be impactful when championed and led by people living in poverty and exclusion especially women and young people.

#### **3.2 How we will achieve the change**

We will empower communities living in poverty and exclusion by strengthening their consciousness of rights and agency, working to understand and address the root causes of injustice, and connecting them with people's organizations, social movements, citizen's groups, and other allies for collective action. We will campaign with and support communities in shifting power dynamics, challenging oppressive structures, and promoting just and sustainable alternatives. Our approach will be guided by human rights principles of empowerment, solidarity, campaigning, and (generating), alternatives, aiming to advance transformational change by analyzing and shifting power structures and holding leaders accountable.

We will continue to build upon our long-term, **human rights-based work in communities, empowering** them to claim and enjoy their rights. Additionally, we will campaign with and support communities in **shifting and transforming power dynamics**, challenging patriarchy and other intersecting forms of oppression, and fostering just, sustainable, and equitable alternatives. We will promote community led and women led economic and ecological alternatives such as agroecology that strengthen long time resilience based on evidence from local, national and global levels.

To address the structural causes of poverty, gender inequality, and injustice, **we will build alliances and build collective power** through networking and partnership among people living in poverty and exclusion, their communities, people's organizations, social movements, and other allies. Strengthening the leadership and voices of those living in poverty and exclusion, especially women, will be a priority, alongside collaborating with women's movements, Human Rights Defenders and feminist organizations to advance gender equality.

Furthermore, we will leverage the knowledge and experiences of communities, collaborating with centers of learning to generate **just social, economic, and ecological alternatives** to existing unjust and unsustainable practices, ensuring the central involvement of the people living in poverty and exclusion, social movements and people's organisations in defining and building these solutions. Our approach will be deeply rooted in an **intersectional feminist analysis**, facilitating dialogues on identity, oppression, discrimination, and concealed structural barriers, as well as addressing the challenges faced by young women in accessing their rights. Through these efforts, we will confront patriarchy and inequality while striving for meaningful and lasting change.

### **3.3 Who we will work with**

ActionAid Liberia (AAL) remains steadfast in its commitment to working with its primary constituencies, women and young people across all initiatives. Our goal is to ensure that no marginalized individual is left behind. Our efforts will revolve around challenging oppression and discrimination faced by people living in poverty and exclusion, all identities of women, including; Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), LGBTIQ individuals, farmers, different ethnic origins, single women, young mothers (whether wed or unwed), those working in both formal and informal sectors, as well as women caretakers at home who depend on other family members' income. Building upon our previous successes, such as the establishment of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in the counties where we operate, we will prioritize partnerships with these women-led CBOs, people's organizations, social movements, citizen's groups, and other allies and leading networks focused on advocating for key and vulnerable population rights.

We will continue our role as a technical partner for the Government of Liberia, particularly the Ministries of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Internal Affairs, Justice, Education, Youth and Sports, Agriculture, INHCR, and the National Commission. Leveraging our legacy in women's empowerment and addressing gender-based violence (GBV), we aim to become a key resource organization while concurrently strengthening the agency of women especially young women. Recognizing the dearth of initiatives targeting women in Liberia, a group that continues to face invisibilities and marginalization, we will concentrate our efforts on bolstering our work with young women of all identities during this strategic period.

To maximize our impact, we will seek opportunities to build alliances and movements with like-minded NGOs and INGOs to influence positive change for our key constituency of women. Additionally, we will intensify our engagement with donors, both existing and prospective, aligning our fundraising efforts with our identified priority areas of work and the specific context of our country, as well as in harmony with our international strategy

### **3.5 How we will work**

We will work with both urban and rural communities to deepen our engagement with social movements and support movement-building across all levels. We will promote women at community level and in movements and networks, developing the leadership of young women and young men, through our community work and our local network of activists and allies within youth organizations and social movements. We will look for the intersections between the movements: strengthening feminist analysis, and approaches in the youth movement and ensuring youth representation within the women's movement.

By engaging directly with constituency-based Organisations and social movements working on social justice, women's rights, youth and environmental struggles (and frontline activists engaged in these), we will be more directly connected to people's struggles, collectively organizing and bringing out grassroots realities. Our geographic spread will enable us to add value by convening and connecting different constituencies movements, struggles across geographies and issues.

We will utilize digital transformation and innovation to enhance our programming, increase visibility, and improve financial management, all while maintaining transparency with people living in poverty and our stakeholders.

### **4.0 Our Program Priorities**

In responding to the context and the analysis coming up, we will work on three collective priority areas:

- Address Structural and systemic Gender Based Violence against Women, girls and other marginalized groups
- Promote democratic governance and accountability through inclusive and active civic participation led by young women to ensure access to gender-responsive public services and the realization of health and educational rights
- Build resilience of communities to adapt and mitigate the impact of climate change and disasters through climate-just practices of natural resource governance, agroecology, and sustainable livelihoods.

#### **4.1 Priority Area One: Address Structural and systemic Gender Based Violence against Women, girls and other marginalized groups**

**Rationale:** Liberia's history, marked by civil wars and social upheaval, has left a lasting impact on the safety and well-being of its women, particularly young women, and marginalized groups. The high prevalence of gender-based violence (GBV), including domestic violence and sexual assault, poses a significant threat to the agency and dignity of women, girls, and other marginalized groups. The deeply entrenched traditional gender norms and harmful practices specifically Female Genital Mutilation and early forced marriage further contribute to this issue.

ActionAid Liberia has prioritised women's rights in our work in the last 15 years, recognising that sustainable development is not attainable if 50% of the population is marginalised from the national development agenda. Complacency and institutionalised discrimination at all levels have begun to shift as women and girls challenge the status quo and win victories around control over their own bodies.

Sexual and gender-based violence is pervasive. Liberia's dual legal system still poses a serious hindrance for women accessing justice in general and around sexual autonomy and bodily integrity in particular. For instance, both state law and the customary system permit and/or encourage female genital mutilation, which is widespread.

Addressing structural and systemic GBV is crucial for fostering a society where all women regardless of age, or identity, can live free from all forms of violence and fear. By prioritizing this area, the intervention aims to create a conducive environment for women, girls, and marginalized groups to actively participate in various aspects of life, ensuring their rights are protected and promoting a culture of gender equality.

**Strategic Objective 1.1: Building agency of women and girls of all identities to challenge the structural and systemic causes of violence and influencing policy reforms through advocacy and collaboration with policymakers.**

Broad Activities: Initiatives will focus on empowering of rural and urban women and girls led platforms to challenge all forms of structural causes of violence and harmful traditional practices and advocate for Community driven By-Laws to end Harmful Traditional Practices including FGM, access to justice and services for VAW Survivors and sexual reproductive health and rights. Motivate and support Women Human Rights Defenders, Young Feminist Movement and women led CSOs to advance policy engagements on access to justice and other support services for women, girls and other marginalized groups. . Build Young Urban Women Movement in Liberia for system change to advance women's rights.

Young women's empowerment will be carried out through educational programmes, skill-building, and leadership training tailored to young women and marginalized groups. Advocacy efforts will involve collaborations and strategic partnerships with civil society organizations, policymakers, and influencers to amplify the voices of young women and marginalized groups. This includes organizing forums, seminars, and dialogues to engage policymakers directly, presenting evidence-based recommendations for policy reforms aimed at addressing the root causes of violence.

Additionally, focus will be put on engaging in constructive dialogue with key stakeholders, including government officials, community leaders, and religious leaders, to advocate for policy reforms and allocation of resources to address VAWG effectively. More efforts will be on advocacy for the enactment and enforcement of comprehensive laws addressing VAWG at both county and national levels. This will include laws covering areas such as domestic violence, sexual assault, harassment, and harmful traditional practices especially the maintenance and renewal of the Moratorium on FGM.

Working with our allies, we will establish mechanisms to monitor the implementation of existing laws and policies related to VAWG, ensuring accountability and effectiveness in addressing structural issues. This shall include follow ups on perpetrators of VAWG and their prosecution.

**Change we want to see**

1. Increased agency of young women and other marginalized groups to challenge structural causes of VAWG and harmful traditional practices.
2. Enhanced Awareness and Engagement within communities, including FGM practitioners, traditional leaders, and religious leaders, on the structural causes of violence and harmful traditional practices.

3. Increased Policy Reforms aimed at addressing the root causes of VAWG including harmful traditional practices.
4. Establishment of Effective Monitoring Mechanisms to monitor the implementation of existing laws and policies related to VAWG ensuring greater accountability and effectiveness in addressing structural issues.

### **Strategic Objective 2. 3: Elevate the political representation of young women while concurrently securing their social, economic, and financial empowerment.**

**Broad Activities:** Women and young people's political participation is critical to Liberia's development, Action for Rights and Social Justice will build women and young people's power to advocate for women's political participation in democratic processes and get elected to serve in national, and sub-national elected positions. Traditional beliefs and norms serve as major impediments for women especially young women to hold key leadership positions at community and national levels. By creating an enabling environment that values and supports the political representation of young women, coupled with initiatives to enhance their social, economic, and financial standing, this strategic objective aims to create a more equitable and inclusive political landscape. Working with like-minded Organisations and allies, initiatives will focus on fostering leadership skills among young women through training programmes, mentorship, and educational opportunities. Advocacy campaigns will be launched to promote inclusive political environments, encouraging young women's participation in decision-making processes. Economic empowerment programmes will be designed to provide young women with access to resources, livelihood skill training, training in entrepreneurship, and financial support to start and sustain businesses. Social empowerment efforts will address gender-based violence through awareness campaigns, legal reforms, and the establishment of support networks for young women.

#### **Changes we want to see:**

1. Increased political representation of young women, holding political office or participating in decision-making roles at various levels of government.
2. Enhanced economic empowerment, increased income among young women, along with reduced poverty rates within this demographic.
3. Improved social inclusion and reduction of gender-based violence through advocacy campaigns, legal reforms, and establishment of support networks for young women.

### **4.2 Priority Area 2: Promote democratic governance and accountability through inclusive and active civic participation led by women to ensure access to gender-responsive public services and realization of community healthcare delivery, and health system strengthening.**

**Rationale:** Democracy and civic participation are essential elements for building a just and inclusive society. Prioritizing democratic governance ensures that the voices of all citizens, especially young women, and marginalized groups have access to services and are heard in decision-making processes. In Liberia, where governance challenges persist, fostering inclusive civic participation led by young women and marginalized groups can contribute to policy reforms and the realization of

gender-responsive public services. This priority area recognizes that active engagement in democratic processes empowers young women and marginalized groups to advocate for their health, educational and other fundamental rights. By enhancing their leadership skills and involvement in governance, young women become agents of change, contributing to the creation of policies that address their unique needs and challenges.

Moreover, a vision of a feminist, just, and sustainable future entails restructuring the economy, society, and politics with a focus on caregiving at the core. Recognizing that care and well-being are essential for the sustainability of societies, economies, and the environment, this approach emphasizes the pivotal role of the State as a redistributive force, collaborating with international institutions to regulate both transnational and domestic corporations. Priority is given to basic needs, developmental objectives, human rights, workers' rights, and environmental preservation over profit-driven motives and wealth accumulation. Central to this alternative is the acknowledgment of the indispensable nature of care and domestic work, whether compensated or not. Nonetheless, the gendered division of labor results in women bearing a disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic responsibilities worldwide, hindering their access to decently compensated employment and encroaching upon their fundamental rights, including education, healthcare, political engagement, and leisure.

**Strategic Objective 2. 1: Empower people living in poverty and exclusion especially young women to actively participate in formal and traditional decision-making processes to advocate for policy reforms and ensure better utilization of health, education, and other gender responsive public services.**

By empowering young women and marginalized groups with the tools and support needed to actively engage in decision-making processes, this strategic objective seeks to foster positive changes in policies and practices that address the unique needs and concerns of young women and these marginalized groups. Sensitization programmes will be developed to provide information on community healthcare delivery, healthcare system strengthening, community access to comprehensive education, and gender-responsive public services. Skill-building and mentorship programmes will be initiated to enhance their advocacy and leadership capabilities. Engaging with formal and traditional decision-making bodies will involve awareness campaigns, dialogue sessions, and capacity-building efforts to ensure young women and other marginalized groups' voices are heard and valued. Networking opportunities and platforms for collaboration will be established to facilitate collective action and amplify the impact of their advocacy.

**Changes we want to see**

1. Increased participation in decision making processes among young women and marginalized groups, enabling them to actively engage in formal and traditional decision-making processes.
2. Increased Engagement in Democratic Governance of young women of all identities in promoting democratic governance, particularly in sectors like health, education, and gender-responsive public services.
3. Increased awareness of the gendered impacts of economic policies, relating to both how revenue is raised and how it is spent, and increased support for feminist economic alternatives.



4. Recognition, reduction, and redistribution of the unpaid care and domestic work burden falling on women and an increase in the number of women able to access decent work in frontline public services *and* other roles (e.g. evidence of reduced gender pay gap).

**Strategic Objective 2.2: Advance economic justice and redistribute women’s unpaid care and domestic work through expanding fiscal and policy space and supporting investment in gender-responsive public services and social protection.**

Economic systems continue to fail people especially women, increasing poverty hunger and reducing access to gender responsive services such as health and education. This increases with low in the democratic governance and accountability through inclusive and active participation by people living in exclusion especially women. To achieve system, change for economic justice, people living in poverty and exclusion, in alliance with social movements, people’s organization and their allies should challenge neoliberalism and its associated austerity, privatization, exploitation and denial of the harmful impacts of unpaid care.

AAL believes that to achieve economic justice through systemic transformation, it is imperative to challenge neoliberalism and its accompanying austerity measures. This involves rejecting the undervaluation of unpaid care work, as well as opposing privatization while constructing progressive alternatives. Emphasis is placed on demonstrating how revenue can be generated and utilized in redistributive and gender-inclusive manners, and on guaranteeing rights through gender responsive public services and comprehensive social safety nets.

Our efforts will include advocating for governmental resistance against austerity policies and restrictions on public expenditure, including those stemming from internalized austerity mindsets within finance ministries and those enforced through austerity policy directives and conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Additionally, we will strive to counteract the privatization of public services and challenge World Bank and donor-driven policies that facilitate such privatization, exacerbating the burden of women’s unpaid care and domestic labour while perpetuating gender disparities.



*Figure 1: A Female Activista member takes lead in advocating for Gender Responsive Public services in Gbarnga City, Bong County.*

Alternative approaches will be promoted to enhance progressive taxation, particularly within the mining and forestry sectors, and to channel resources into gender-responsive public services and universal social protection schemes. Furthermore, we will advocate for feminist economic alternatives and policies that prioritize gender responsive public services and social protections.

### **Changes we want to see:**

1. Increased participation in decision making processes among young women and marginalized groups, enabling them to actively engage in formal and traditional decision-making processes.
2. Increased Engagement in Democratic Governance of young women of all identities in promoting democratic governance, particularly in sectors like health, education, and other gender-responsive public services.
3. Increased awareness of the gendered impacts of economic policies, relating to both how revenue is raised and how it is spent, and increased support for feminist economic alternatives.
4. Recognition, reduction and redistribution of the unpaid care and domestic work burden falling on women and increases in the number of women able to access decent work in frontline public services *and* other roles (e.g. evidence of reduced gender pay gap).

### **4.3 Priority Area 3: Build resilience of communities to adapt and mitigate the impact of climate change and disasters through climate just practices of natural resource governance, agroecology and sustainable livelihoods**

**Rationale:** Prioritizing the building of community resilience in Liberia is imperative due to the country's heightened vulnerability to climate change impacts, including extreme weather events and sea-level rise. By fostering climate just alternatives in natural resource governance, promoting agroecology, supporting sustainable livelihoods, and addressing illicit financial flows and environmental degradation, this intervention bolsters nutrition, food security, and renewable energy access, and diversifies economic opportunities while aligning with just transition principles, empowering marginalized communities, and ensuring their equitable participation. The critical importance of increased community participation in natural resource governance, particularly among women, girls, and young people, is underscored by growing tensions over access and management of natural resources. Despite constitutional guarantees, significant disparities persist, especially affecting women's access to land resources, undermining their economic empowerment and food security. Prioritizing increased community participation fosters inclusive decision-making processes, advances gender equality and social justice, and strengthens communities' capacity to adapt to changing environmental conditions and crises by incorporating diverse perspectives, and local knowledge, and fostering equitable resource management practices.

**Strategic Objective 3.1: Influencing policy and advocating for reforms in the formal and customary legal systems to ensure that women and young people of all identities have access, control and entitlement over productive resources, especially agricultural land.**

Broad Activities: The goal is to create an environment where women and young people, regardless of identity, can exercise their rights to access, control, and own productive resources, particularly agricultural land. Realizing this objective involves targeted advocacy and policy reform campaigns. This initiative will engage with government bodies, legal institutions, and communities to raise awareness about the importance of women's rights



Figure 2: Young Women lead the Climate Justice Campaign launch march in Monrovia, September, 2023

to land access, ownership and control. Collaborations with local and international organizations will be forged to lobby for legal reforms that recognize and protect women's land rights. Capacity building programmes will aim to inform women about their legal rights and avenues for recourse in case of violations.

#### Changes we want to see:

1. Increased independent access to land and natural resources by marginalized women and young people of all identities
2. Increased Legal Recognition and protection of land rights of women and young people, irrespective of their identities leading to equal access, control, and entitlement over productive resources.
3. Improved Awareness and Advocacy: government bodies, legal institutions, and communities more aware and actively safeguard and promote women's rights to land ownership and control.
4. Effective Collaboration for Legal Reforms with local and international organizations to lobby for legal reforms that recognize and protect women's land rights.
5. Increased awareness, knowledge and skills on legal rights and avenues for recourse in case of violations amongst women, leading to increased instances of women asserting their rights and using the available legal systems effectively.

**Strategic Objective 3.2: Promote climate resilient ecological practices and build capacity of communities, especially women, to achieve resilient sustainable agriculture, energy, and alternative livelihood solutions in wake of the frequent disasters and climate change.**

Broad Activities: This strategic objective aims to empower communities, with a particular emphasis on women, to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change and build sustainable, resilient livelihoods. Educational campaigns will be launched to raise awareness about climate change and its impacts, with a focus on building the resilience of vulnerable communities, especially women. Build movements' power to advocate for the transition to agroecology. Capacity building programmes will be developed to impart sustainable agricultural



*Figure 3: Smallholder Women farmers preparing compost manure as part of Agroecology practices in Tambah Community, Korkoyah District in Bong County.*

practices, green entrepreneurship, and diversification of livelihoods, ensuring communities are equipped to adapt to changing environmental conditions. Collaboration with local and international partners will facilitate the implementation of climate-resilient initiatives.

#### **Changes we want to see:**

1. Fresh narratives are shaped and local communities practice climate resilient sustainable agro-ecological solutions to prevent and address natural and climate-induced disasters.
2. Increased practice in resilient alternative livelihoods with increased income within communities especially among marginalized women

#### **Strategic Objective 3.3: Empower communities to influence policy, advocating for reforms in the extractives and energy sectors.**

Broad Activities: The strategic objective aims to strengthen social cohesion and economic empowerment where communities and extractive industries can benefit from shared natural resources. Increased citizens' participation in natural resource governance for national economic growth. AAL will support women and young people, their movements alliance, networks, and organizations to engage in compliance monitoring within the extractive and energy sectors, to reduce illicit financial flows and increase national tax revenue.

We will undertake a comprehensive approach to address the challenges faced by women, girls, and young people in accessing land resources in Liberia by implementing a series of strategic activities. These include community sensitization and awareness-raising programs to educate stakeholders about existing constitutional provisions and national frameworks governing land ownership, as well as capacity-building initiatives to empower them with the necessary knowledge and skills for effective engagement in decision-making processes. We will also work to strengthen institutional mechanisms and frameworks for gender-responsive land governance, enforce existing laws and policies, foster partnerships and alliances with relevant stakeholders, and conduct research and data collection initiatives to inform evidence-based interventions.

### **Changes we want to see:**

1. Improved Social Cohesion and Economic Empowerment enabling communities and extractive industries to benefit from shared natural resources.
2. Enhanced Citizen Participation in Natural Resource Governance particularly by women, young people, and their movements, leading to more inclusive decision-making processes and equitable distribution of benefits.
3. Effective Compliance Monitoring within the extractive and energy sectors on illicit financial flows and ensuring that companies operate in accordance with legal and regulatory standards.

### **Strategic Objective 4. Advanced transformative women leadership in emergency preparedness, response and influence**

Broad Activities: To achieve this objective, we will increase our organizational technical capacity to respond to humanitarian needs and visibility of a national women-led humanitarian network. We will strengthen national safeguarding measures and mechanisms for the protection of women, children, and vulnerable groups. In addition, we will increase communities' emergency preparedness systems and disaster planning at the national level. Building on our experience with Ebola Virus Disease and COVID-19, we will support women-led networks to engage national stakeholders and other humanitarian actors to invest and support emergency preparedness and disaster planning from a human rights perspective. The network will receive capacity building in core humanitarian standards, feminist analysis, safeguarding principles, accountability mechanisms, and also be linked to regional and global calls to action for localization of national humanitarian response. We will also support the network to generate evidence on the difference women's leadership makes during humanitarian response at national and global levels by engaging in research and data gathering.

### **Changes we want to see:**

1. Increased representation of women and diverse stakeholders in decision-making and humanitarian forums at national and community levels.
2. Improved technical skills and capabilities within the organization and women-led networks to respond effectively to humanitarian needs.
3. Strengthened Implementation of robust safeguarding policies and human rights-based approaches to protect women, children, and vulnerable groups.
4. Enhanced community-level preparedness and evidence-based planning for emergencies and disasters.
5. Increased visibility, advocacy, and support for women-led humanitarian initiatives at national and global levels.

## **5.0 Organizational Priorities**

### **5.1 Strengthen feminist leadership across the organization**

ActionAid Liberia will prioritize the strengthening of feminist leadership in line with ActionAid International's feminist leadership principles. We will enhance these principles with gender-sensitive policies and foster an inclusive work environment where all staff can practice robust feminist leadership consistent with AAL's top 10 basics. Our approach will involve a proactive stance towards recruiting and developing the capacities of women and individuals from diverse backgrounds. We will invest in nurturing the leadership potential of women by providing them with knowledge, skills,

and opportunities to gain valuable experiences. Furthermore, we will formulate a diversity policy aimed at increasing the representation of women in leadership roles and instilling feminist values in our staff, empowering them to embrace feminist leadership.

### **Changes we want to see:**

- i. Demonstrable evidence of gender equity and women's leadership within the organization.
- ii. All Senior Managers held accountable for how they practice the AAL top 10 basics. This will be done through annual performance reviews.
- iii. An active women's forum leading AAL's efforts in promoting feminist leadership.

## **5.2 Organizational Development and Strengthening Staff Capacity**

In 2019, AAL was part of nine ActionAid countries that were endorsed by the International General Assembly as early adopters of the Country Model Review (CMR), a strategic restructuring process for increased strategic impact, and financial sustainability as a country program. AAL was removed from the Child Sponsorship funding which is a regular supporter-based giving fund) which was covering overhead costs including salaries for the country program staff. The AAL removal from the Child Sponsorship program resulted in the release of high-level senior staff from their positions because the organization was solely going to depend on institutional funds. The CRM processes posed several changes that led to challenges ranging from high labor turnover and donor dissatisfaction up to the end of 2023. To overcome most of the challenges, we faced during the Country Strategy Paper II, we have hired highly experienced women's rights, finance and operations, program and policy, business development, and resource mobilization managers who have joined the country director to lead the implementation of the new CSP III. However, sustaining the core staff is based on substantial institutional funding. Leveraging on the service sharing agreement and support from the Global secretariat has contributed towards improvement. We will strengthen systems, policies, and capacity development programs, including thorough orientations on AAL's history, approaches, policy stances, and ongoing projects. This will ensure alignment among all staff regarding our vision, values, and methods of engagement with stakeholders, as well as the consequences of policy breaches. Our goal is to foster an organizational culture that promotes staff motivation, teamwork, and enhances staff well-being and potential fulfillment. Additionally, we will support staff through targeted capacity-building activities that align with performance management systems and organizational priorities.

To enhance staff retention, AAL will institutionalize a succession plan and talent management process linked to performance management and competitive remuneration based on responsive market informed benchmarks and cost of living conditions. A dedicated budget will be allocated for staff development needs to bolster capacity within the organization.

Furthermore, we will invest in upgrading IT systems to strengthen data and knowledge management, facilitating effective information sharing and digitalization efforts.

While our previous strategy included plans to become an associate, external factors beyond our control delayed this process. However, we are committed to achieving this goal in the current strategy period. Given an Advisory Board has been established with the Global Secretariat, by

midterm of the Country Strategy Paper III, a Board with oversight and leadership of the Country Program would have been inducted and leading the internationalization discussion.

We will reinforce our interventions on SHEA and Safeguarding measures through systems and procedures. AAL developed a SHEA and Safeguarding strategy approved by the Global Secretariat, we will ensure integration of SHEA and Safeguarding activities across all programs and support units for full implementation.

**Changes we want to see:**

- i. Enhanced organizational culture through improved staff alignment on vision, values, and engagement methods.
- ii. Increased organization stability and significantly increased staff retention rates, reaching up to 85%.
- iii. Strengthened data management and information sharing capabilities, facilitating streamlined digitalization efforts and informed decision-making processes.
- iv. Increase in numbers of women in leadership positions within the organization

**5.3 Human resources and geographical footprint**



Currently, our presence span across 14 counties (Gbarpolu, Bomi, Montserrado, Grand Bassa, Grand Gedeh, River Gee, Sinoe, Margibi, Grand Cape Mount, Nimba, Lofa, River Cess, Maryland) with several project activities but we hold offices in only 4 of them (Bong, Montserrado, Grand Gedeh and Gbarpolu). In counties where NGO presence was limited, comprehensive interventions were implemented, while strategic collaborations were forged in areas with existing agencies. Meticulous planning was undertaken to withdraw resources from underfunded or unsustainable projects, potentially involving staff redeployment or downsizing.

Upon careful introspection in light of our current context and growth, we have determined that our focus will be on sustaining our presence in the 4 counties where we currently have offices and we will endeavor to deepen our impact and enhance our efforts in Grand Gedeh, Grand Bassa, River Cess, Gbarpolu, Montserrado, Margibi, and Bong Counties, where our roots run deep.

### **Change we want to see:**

- i. Strategic presence in previously underserved communities across 14 counties.
- ii. Enhanced collaboration with existing community-based organizations (CBOs) and NGOs/INGOs to maximize impact and effectiveness.
- iii. Improved responsiveness to emergencies and disasters, supported by strategic resource allocation and flexibility in deployment.

### **5.4 Innovative and strong partnerships**

To achieve the objectives set forth in CSP III, we will proactively seek out new and strategic partnerships across diverse sectors. This entails fostering innovative collaborations with academia, media, unions, networks, citizen movements, and community-based organizations (CBOs) in both urban and rural areas. We will capitalize on our existing partnerships with international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), multilateral and bilateral corporations, and governments to effectively serve people living in poverty and exclusion. Our engagement with national, regional, and international stakeholders, coupled with participation in significant forums such as UNCSW, UN/FAO-CFS, COFI, and Women Deliver, will enable us to showcase our work and engage with like-minded partners.

In terms of resource mobilization, we will actively seek support from bilateral and international partners to finance initiatives in health, education, agriculture, and climate justice. Conducting thorough analyses of the donor landscape and local implementing actors will allow us to assess their capacity and alignment with our organization's vision and values. We will then engage selected local partners through collaboration memoranda, , providing institutional capacity-building support to strengthen their ownership of program delivery. Additionally, we will strive to secure funding to meet the operational needs of our local partners' offices and facilitate staff co-location within their premises across our designated geographical areas.

### **Changes we want to see:**

- i. Increased funding diversification and accessibility through strategic engagement with bilateral and international partners enables the organization to bolster our financial resources for impactful initiatives.
- ii. Enhanced collaboration with diverse stakeholders, including academia, media, unions, networks, and community-based organizations, fostering innovative solutions and amplifying the organization's impact and effectiveness in addressing complex societal challenges.
- iii. Strengthened organizational effectiveness and accountability through active promotion of staff co-location within local partner offices and meticulous oversight of operational needs, ensures transparent and efficient utilization of resources towards achieving localized, impactful outcomes.
- iv. Transformed approach to grants management towards a more localized, enabling, safe, and accountable model.

### **5.5 Communications and Visibility**

As part of our communications and visibility strategy, we will align our branding with the objectives outlined in our new CSP III, utilizing information, communication tools, and technology to monitor and showcase the impact of our programs. A comprehensive plan will be developed to guide all



communications, including donor-funded and federation campaign work, with periodic updates to reflect changes in context and program deliverables.

To enhance our online presence, we will invest in improving internet technology and services, integrate SMS and radio programming for local context, and revamp our website with the latest publications and high-quality content. We will employ inclusive and flexible methods, including digital and social media, to increase visibility among stakeholders and communicate our approach and impact effectively.

Internally, our focus will be on boosting our communications team by prioritizing the addition of personnel. Additionally, we'll procure advanced equipment for data storage, branding, and documentation, setting aside dedicated budget lines to ensure seamless coordination. This initiative aims to enhance the coverage and documentation of all AAL activities. Furthermore, we will empower both staff and partners to creatively convey our campaigning and advocacy messages, utilizing tools such as case studies, stories of change, and social media platforms.

In addition to conducting biannual fundraising events and strengthening communication with government stakeholders, we will cultivate a roster of brand ambassadors for targeted campaigns. Weekly showcases on social media and notice boards will highlight our achievements, while investments in internal and external branding initiatives will reinforce our organizational identity.

**Changes we want to see:**

- i. Increased visibility and deeper engagement with the organization's online audience with measurable growth in website traffic, social media followers, and engagement rates.
- ii. Demonstrated effective campaigns through tangible outcomes such as increased petition signatures, donations received, or enacted policy changes resulting from advocacy efforts especially the Public Health Law, anti-FGM Policy.
- iii. Enhanced stakeholder engagement through survey responses, feedback mechanisms, and higher participation rates in events or activities.
- iv. Improved organisation recognition and trust in the organization's brand through internal branding initiatives, including structure/equipment branding and staff representation.

**5.6 Financial Resources and Systems**

AAL envisions that it will cost at least 3.5 million USD annually for it to be able to achieve the aspirations of the CSP III. The costing takes into account the funding trend of the last 3 years prior to this CSP. The allocation of resources considers AAL niche developed over the years as well as the emerging issues identified in the course of developing this CSP while adhering to the Financial Management Framework split between program costs and support costs.

Below is the envisioned CSP costing by priority as well as programmatic and support costs.

Core outcome areas	OVERALL %	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Priority 1: Women's Rights and Gender Equality	35%	34%	36%	35%	35%	35%

<b>Priority 2: Democracy and Governance</b>	<b>14%</b>	14%	15%	14%	14%	14%
<b>Priority 3: Climate and Resilience, National Resource Management, Humanitarian</b>	<b>21%</b>	20%	22%	21%	21%	21%
<b>Cross-Cutting</b>	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%
<b>Administrative Cost</b>	29%	27%	28%	30%	30%	29%
<b>TOTAL COSTING</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

AAL will target institutional funding which has been the backbone of its funding streams over the years as well as trusts and foundations. AAL will still rely on AAI funding to provide stability and bridge the funding gap.

Below is the envisioned split between the various funding streams.

Funding type	Overall %	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Institutional		92%	75%	80%	80%	80%
Trusts and Foundations			10%	10%	10%	10%
AAL Internal funds		8%	15%	10%	10%	10%

## Systems

Given the funding analysis, for sustainability, we will ensure that our financial management remains robust, meeting both internal and external accountability standards. Our policies and systems, including the Financial Manual, Top 10 basics, Procurement policy, Assets Management, and Partnership Strategy, are tailored to align with ActionAid International Financial Management Framework and local regulations, ensuring adherence to human rights principles. Staff awareness and compliance with these policies will be paramount to maintaining transparency and mitigating risks.

Additionally, we aim to implement a contract management system to optimize cost recovery on donor-funded projects. To achieve these goals, we will regularly review and enhance our Financial and Procurement system and related tools, providing training and conducting compliance reviews to bolster staff and partners' capacity. Procurement policies and procedures will be strengthened through updates and capacity building initiatives, with support from the National Public Procurement Commission where necessary. Annual audits across financial, HR, and program domains will be conducted to maintain effective internal controls, with corrective measures promptly implemented. We plan to introduce paperless processes to streamline information storage and access, leveraging technology to improve procurement-to-payment procedures and ensure clear segregation of duties.

## Changes we want to see:

- i. Improved financial stability and sustainability through aligning policies and systems with international standards and local regulations.

- ii. Enhanced transparency and accountability to stakeholders coupled with staff awareness and compliance
- iii. Increased efficiency with streamlined operations through contract management systems and paperless processes improve efficiency, reducing administrative burdens.

## **5.7 Resource Mobilization**

AAL do have an ambitious target to increase annual budget from 3.285 million to 3.5 million annually with a total budget of 17.85 million United States Dollars by 2028. Learning from past challenges, we seek quality growth that builds our core competencies and carves a stronger niche in Gender and Women's Rights programming, Climate adaptation and Resilience, and Natural Resource Management interventions. We remain open to opportunities in the education and health sectors but are mindful that these spaces might be occupied by other actors. We aim to build back a strong multi-year funding base while simultaneously securing our place within the top 5 women and marginalised groups' empowerment INGOs. This will not only strengthen our financial stability but also provide opportunities to work more effectively across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The pre-condition for effective financial growth and management will be strengthening our financial and risk management capacity –this is addressed outside of our resource mobilization strategy.

While we recognize the critical need to secure additional resources, particularly as ActionAid Liberia faces a challenging financial situation with the impending end of CMR funding in 2024, we will pursue a multifaceted approach. This includes continuing our current fundraising efforts while also exploring new avenues for financial support. We will actively promote program-led funding, involving Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and communities as equal partners in development. Moreover, we will assist national CSOs and CBOs in raising funds independently, offering our technical expertise and knowledge.

In order to expand the depth and impact of our work, we will seek funding from various sources such as government entities, bilateral-donors, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), and the private sector. Collaborating with like-minded NGOs and INGOs to form consortiums will increase our chances of securing larger projects.

We are committed to maintaining strategic partnerships with institutional and high-value donors. Strengthening our capacity in project management, enhancing technical expertise, and improving communication with existing donors will be key priorities. Additionally, we will actively engage with AA International and Regional teams to coordinate fundraising efforts.

In line with our strategic priorities, we will expand our focus to include healthcare service delivery and primary education. Seeking institutional funds to support robust health, education, and agriculture programs as an alternative to aligned with the Government of Liberia's development agenda (AREST) will be a priority.

We aim to diversify our team and forge new partnerships to benefit from diverse perspectives and enhance program delivery cost-effectively.

### **Changes we want to see:**

- i. Enhanced financial sustainability through diversification of funding sources and proactive exploration of new avenues for financial support.
- ii. Expanded program impact by securing funding from diverse sources, enabling ActionAid Liberia (AAL) to address a wider range of community needs aligned with national development priorities.
- iii. Strategic partnerships and collaboration with like-minded NGOs and consortiums to increase opportunities for securing larger projects and leveraging collective expertise and resources.
- iv. Diversified portfolio and donor base, reducing reliance on specific donors or funding streams and enhancing AAL's resilience to funding fluctuations while increasing its capacity to address pressing societal challenges in Liberia.

## **6.0 Risk Management**

During the implementation of CSP III, AAL anticipates encountering various risks that necessitate mitigation strategies. In recent years, AAL has diversified its funding sources, transitioning away from the Child Sponsorship program and relying more on institutional funding. This shift has introduced new compliance risks, particularly concerning adherence to donor regulations.

To address these challenges, we will ensure compliance with funding terms and actively promote Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to strengthen organizational confidence and funding opportunities. Additionally, we will enhance the effectiveness of internal controls through regular audits and the development of a risk register to identify and mitigate potential risks.

Under the Service Level Agreement with Sierra Leone for internal audits, we will conduct risk-based audits to optimize resource allocation and support management in risk management and internal control efforts, thereby bolstering donor confidence.

Regular updates will be provided to the Global Secretariat to facilitate their oversight role. AAL's risk management policy will undergo review during CSP III to align with industry standards, aiming to effectively identify and manage risks that could hinder strategy implementation and organizational development.

### **Changes we want to see:**

- i. Reduced risks through regular audits and compliance thereby safeguarding against financial losses or reputational damage.
- ii. Clean financial audits annually.
- iii. Stronger program delivery and financial management capacities among partners.

**RISK MATRIX**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Probability (High, Low)</b>	<b>Impact (High, Medium, Low)</b>	<b>Mitigation Strategy</b>	<b>Risk Owner</b>
Shrinking political and civic space – political backlash working with peoples’ Organisations and social movements	High	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in coalitions, networks, and consortiums to spread the risk.</li> <li>• Be fully legally compliant to national laws</li> <li>• Undertake risk assessment of those activities that may put the organization at risk and conduct scenario mapping.</li> <li>• Rapid response fund for human rights safety and protection</li>   <li>• Strict adherence to Data security policies.</li> <li>• Train of staff and partners to recognize and respond effectively to political and civic threats.</li> </ul>	Country Director
Criminalization of work on LGBTIQ work in Liberia	Med	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work in partnership with Human rights Movement and LGBTIQ communities to lead on activities implementation.</li> <li>• Demonstrate how AAL programs align with the international framework and protocol, Government’s strategy promoting human rights.</li> <li>• Involve officials from local government departments in design, inception and implementation ensuring they understand programs aims, progress and challenges</li> <li>• Emergency response funds for staff, partners and human rights defenders safety and protection</li> </ul>	Program

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	
Recruit and retain required staff	High	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutionalize a succession plan and talent management process</li> <li>• Provide management and competitive remuneration based on responsive market informed benchmarks and cost of living conditions.</li> <li>• Have dedicated budget for staff development needs to bolster capacity within the organization.</li> </ul>	CD/Finance and Operations Manager
CMR implementation including Reduction in Regular Giving and Flexible Funds	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AAL has recruited a Business Development Manager who will primarily lead fundraising activities up to 2029</li> <li>• New CSP III costed and Mapping of potential new donors and foster alliances.</li> <li>• Diversify fundraising strategies and lookat new models like impact investing etc.</li> </ul>	Business Development and Resource Innovation Manager
Non-compliance to procurement procedures	High	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compliance to the procurement policy and procedures by all staff</li> <li>• Hold policy violators accountable.</li> <li>• Centralize large procurements</li> <li>• Continuous review of procurement processes</li> <li>• Build capacity of staff on procurement processes</li> </ul>	Finance and Operations Manager
SHEA and Safeguarding policy breach by staff and or partner	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• AAL has worked to strengthen staff understanding and compliance around child protection, anti-sexual harassment including appointment of Anti-Sexual harassment and Child protection.</li> <li>• Include policies as part of induction and contractual requirement and update staff and</li> </ul>	CD/HR/SHEA & Safeguarding focal person

			<p>partners through annual refresher trainings and an anti-ASH week.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delegated Safeguarding Focal Person and roll out of safeguarding Plan and reporting forms; and Hotline is now in place for reporting</li> </ul>	
Programming becoming donor driven and not mission driven	Low	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify donors who align to our mission and vision</li> <li>Develop concepts that carry our mission, vision, and values.</li> </ul>	Country Director
Failure to achieve Country Strategy Paper targets			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuous, regular, monitoring and evaluation field visits.</li> <li>Clear alignment of Mission goals with Donor goals.</li> </ul>	Program and Policy Manager/Business Development/
Weak Partner capacity systems	High	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear mechanism for assessment and identification of partners.</li> <li>Develop a partner capacity building plan.</li> </ul>	Program/Business Development Resource Mobilization Innovation Manager
Low National Level Reserves	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strict adherence to cost recovery strategy</li> <li>Proper budgeting during proposal development</li> </ul>	Finance and Operations Manager