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Policy Brief

ActionAid Liberia

Title of Research:

Enhancing Young Women's access to Land and Natural Resources in Liberia

Location (s) of research:

Liberia

The context and the importance of the issue or problem

Globally, access and title to land and other basic public services are always tied to human sustainability and the maintenance of peace. Land remains one of the most important assets that immensely supports livelihood and humans are dependent on land for many reasons including to increase food security through agriculture, mining, forestry, etc.

However, Liberia is prone to a renewed crisis owing to growing tension over access and ownership to land, mainly by women, girls and children. The Liberian Constitution [**Article 22, Section A**] *'guarantees every person the right to own property alone as well as in association with others; provided that only Liberian citizens have the right to own real property within in the Republic'*. In addition to the constitution of Liberia, the Land Rights Act (2018), Community Rights Law (2006), and the Local Government Act, are all national frameworks that guide the ownership, use, and management of land and natural resources in Liberia. These frameworks seek to promote peace and social cohesion, strengthen equality and equity in the distribution of wealth and power to communities and citizens of Liberia, especially the marginalized and excluded.

The Land Rights Act approved in 2018 has since documented huge discriminations in land and natural resource administration, emphasizing the respect for community land rights, financial transparency, and efficiency in the use of Liberia's natural resources.

In Liberia, Women make up 50.2% (2.61 Million) and 34% of the population falls within the young people bracket of ages 10-24. Women are a dominant figure in agriculture and economic production and land is a major source of livelihood for women who account for approximately 80% of the agricultural Labour force responsible for 93% of food crop production. (GoL, 2009).

Despite women constituting over 50% of Liberia's population and playing a pivotal role in agriculture, they face unequal access to land. Young women, in particular, encounter obstacles in decision-making processes due to traditional norms and discriminatory practices. The Land Rights Act, while a positive step, falls short in fully protecting young women from such biases.

Young women are often considered dependents and as such they are excluded from key decision making involving their future and wellbeing. Access and/or right to land ownership is one of the challenges that young women face due to power struggle from their male counterpart. Young women are not given equal opportunity to benefit from communal land resources much to the extent of older women and men, which result in discrimination in land tenure. Other policies such as the national youth policy (2019 – 2023) did not exclusively speak to young women participation in access and ownership to natural resources.

Liberian law gives minimum rights [one – third] for women to access land through customary marriages, and the constitution guarantees all persons the right to own land. But, in practical terms, women's rights to land and properties are unequal to that of their male counterparts. Their rights to own, inherit, manage and dispose of land suffer daily attacks as a result of traditional practices, customs, laws and public perception that women cannot be trusted with or do not deserve property.

The lack of land titles further worsens financial vulnerabilities for women, hindering their ability to access credit for livelihood improvement. This issue is compounded by bureaucratic bottlenecks, limiting opportunities for rural young women and girls. The Land

	<p>Title is a critical collateral requirement by financial institutions, perpetuating economic challenges for women.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Findings / Critique of policy option(s)</p>	<p>Land related conflicts is still prevalent among concession communities and is a serious national issue that could result to violence in Liberia.</p> <p>Existing multi-stakeholder platforms, established for conflict resolution, display gender imbalances, especially in leadership roles. Liberia entered into a trade agreement with the European Union in 2013 to improve the management of forest resources and reduce illegal logging. Out of that agreement, a National Multi-stakeholder Monitoring Committee (NMMC) was established. The NMMC aims to promote inclusive decision-making and discussion on forest/land related issues. Also, in continued recognition of peace and conflict prevention in concession affected communities in Liberia, the National Bureau of Concessions (NBC) with support from UNDP, established Multi-Stakeholders Platform (MSPs) in concession affected communities.</p> <p>Young women's perspectives and voices are not adequately represented, in these structures hindering their participation in critical decisions that affect their livelihoods. This lack of inclusion poses a risk to sustainable peace and prosperity in Liberia.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Implications and Policy Recommendations</p>	<p>Considering the problems surrounding land acquisition and young women involvement in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Liberia, this policy brief recommends the following actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Review and Revise Traditional Practices: Traditional leaders must review and address discriminatory traditional practices undermining women's land access, ensuring the Land Rights Act provides guidelines for young women's participation in dispute resolution, safeguarding them from discrimination. Public Awareness: The government through its agencies such as the Liberia Land Authority (LLA) must conduct extensive public awareness campaigns on land rights laws, specifically targeting young women. Empower them with knowledge about their rights and the pathways to claim them. 2. Inclusive Multi stakeholder Platforms: International Partners must International partners should collaborate with the government to ensure multi-stakeholder platforms are inclusive of all genders and age groups, particularly young women, in peacebuilding structures. 3. Nationwide Extension of Platforms: The Government and key stakeholders must expand multi-stakeholder platforms to cover all fifteen counties, addressing land conflicts not only in concession areas but also within communities, households, and beyond

<p style="text-align: center;">Implications and Policy Recommendations</p>	<p>4. Government Assessment and Alternative Livelihood. The Government, through the National Bureau of Concessions, must assess the impact of land tenure on young women's livelihoods and establish plans for a sustainable transition into alternative livelihoods for those affected.</p> <p>Addressing gender disparities in land ownership and fostering young women's involvement in peacebuilding are integral to Liberia's sustainable development. Collaborative efforts from the government, international organizations, civil society, and policymakers are crucial to ensure the protection of young women's rights and their active inclusion in peacebuilding mechanisms. This policy brief serves as a call to action, urging stakeholders to strengthen collaboration and allocate resources to promote gender equality and sustainable peace in Liberia</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Limitations and further research</p>	<p>This policy brief results from a one-day policy dialogue on economic justice held on December 12, 2023, involving stakeholders from Government, Civil Society, the media, academia, and the private sector. Further research on young women's representation in community land dispute resolution structures and access to title deeds is recommended for targeted interventions and program development</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">References</p>	<p><i>National Policy Dialogue on Economic Justice. (2023). ActionAid Liberia and UN Peacebuilding Fund.</i></p> <p><i>UN Peacebuilding Fund. (2022). Promoting Women's Rights and Land Ownership – Liberia. Retrieved from https://unsdg.un.org/latest/stories/</i></p> <p><i>Multi-stakeholder Platform Extends to Grand Kru (UN Development Program, 16 July 2018)</i></p> <p><i>Multi-stakeholder Platform and Gender Equality: Lessons from Liberia's Forest (Claire McAlpine, Palladium, 2 January 2024)</i></p> <p><i>Liberia national gender profile of agriculture and rural livelihood, FAO 2018</i></p>

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