Report on Women's Empowerment in Liberia

Diamond Leadership Role Model Project

July 2018

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION FROM NDI

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is grateful for the opportunity to work with the Visionary Young Women in Leadership (VYWL) on mapping and analyzing women's participation and empowerment in Liberia.

NDI works with political parties to strengthen the role of women and women's wings within parties, including increasing recruitment of women candidates, cultivating advanced campaign skills for political party women, creating alliances and increasing demand for women leaders.   NDI also conducted the GRTL women's leadership program ahead of the 2017 election to strengthen the leadership skills of women activists to participate in the election as voters, campaign managers, candidates, etc. (See Faces of Liberian Leadership, Women Leaders of Today and Tomorrow: NDI, 2018).

The VYWL first came together as a group during NDI's Getting Ready to Lead (GRTL) program, a USAID-funded training, mentoring and coaching leadership program for women in Liberia. During the GRTL program, this group of young women developed a collective interest in managing the political campaigns of female political candidates in Liberia's October 2017 election. After completing additional campaign management training, they volunteered their time to train campaign staff, conduct voter outreach, establish and operate phone banks to encourage women to register to vote, as well as many other activities.

After the 2017 election, the VYWL team wanted to continue to work together, in particular to support more young women to become engaged in issues and public policy. Before taking action, they agreed that they needed more data that could inform potential interventions and advocacy. NDI was delighted to support the volunteer force with this research by providing technical assistance and training to the VYWL team, which included conducting research, data analysis, report writing, and conducting interviews and focus groups.

As a result, the final VWYL report hopes to not only inform the objectives for supporting young aspiring leaders, but will also help identify future interventions to complement current and past programming with respect to women's empowerment.

Figure 1: Members of VYWL at NDI's Campaign Expo held in Liberia in 2017

The members of VYWL are between 20 and 34 years old and come from diverse academic fields including criminal justice, public administration, sociology, accounting, journalism, information technology, biology and agriculture. Each of the young women also has at least three years of experience in community engagement activities. Many of the VYWL women also engage in various advocacy activities and serve as leaders and activists at their universities, in their political parties and in their communities.

As this report illustrates, there are many paths to leadership and no doubt what makes or defines a leader will continue to be the subject of much study and debate. However, in addition to the research skills that the VYWL team acquired during the course of this project, it is our hope that the experience also provided them with personal and valuable takeaways, especially from the one-on-one interviews with the inspirational women leaders who agreed to be interviewed as part of this project.

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Figure 2: Members of the VYWL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Although Liberia's 2005 democratic transition saw the election of Africa's first woman head of state, Liberian women continue to face considerable challenges to their participation in political processes. While women are slowly closing the gap, they are still underrepresented as party and civil society leaders, elected representatives and government officials.

To better understand the challenges to women's leadership and to find a way forward, NDI is working with a group of young women volunteers known as the **Visionary Young Women in Leadership (VYWL),** who conducted research to examine women's political empowerment in Liberia.

The first goal of the research was to assess the current state of women's political responsibility in Liberia by conducting a **mapping** of women leaders in four sectors—**executive, legislative, judicial and security sectors**. The VYWL used USAID's Diamond Leadership Model (DLM) to measure women's numerical representation in 12 different leadership positions in the legislative, executive, judicial and security sectors across high, middle and low leadership tiers. Due to difficulties accessing data, a security sector analysis could not be completed. The mapping and analysis showed that **higher percentages of women occupy leadership positions and hold more responsibility in the judiciary than in the executive and legislative sectors in Liberia.** Liberia's women's empowerment **scores in 2018**

Liberia's WPS 2018
=
63

Executive (21) + Legislative (10) + Judicial (32) Scores = Women's Power Score (WPS)

Security score could not be calculated, thus a triangle (3-point) analysis was conducted

declined slightly from scores in 2014 when a similar analysis was conducted.[1] Liberia has shown similar levels of women's empowerment when compared to a sample of other nations in Sub-Saharan Africa. Liberia closely mirrors Ghana and Kenya, both of which also show that women have more responsibility in the judiciary than other sectors. When Liberia is compared to a sample of other developing countries outside the region, Liberia's scores fall in the middle.

The second research objective was to conduct in-person interviews to identify common challenges that aspiring women leaders face, and determine what attributes, characteristics or tools helped current women leaders to attain their positions. Challenges and barriers to women in leadership included poverty; lack of access to education; domestic duties; cultural and familial barriers; sexism; as well as low levels of confidence and a high degree of shyness. The VYWL team determined that current and future leaders should prioritize completing their education as well as emphasize other key leadership skills; build confidence by becoming more effective communicators; be persistent, tenacious and resilient; seek out personal and professional support such as a mentor; provide support for current women leaders who continue to face challenges; utilize diverse networks; and create authentic and regular connections with communities.

Based on this research, the VYWL team developed general recommendations, including:
- **Keep girls in school;**
- **Establish a career development and mentorship program;**
- **Implement regular and ongoing training programs (with a training-of-trainer component) for women leaders to create diverse networks and build skills like public speaking and policy development; and**
- **Create a policy think tank**

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[1] USAID, Women's Leadership as a Route to Greater Empowerment; Report on the Diamond Leadership Model. Annex 1, Diamond Leadership Indicators by Country; Sub-Saharan Africa, Page 34.

BACKGROUND

After the October 2017 elections in Liberia, a West African country home to 4.6 million people, the country experienced its first peaceful democratic transition of power in over 70 years. Freedom House ranked the country as "partly free" when assessing its political rights and civil liberties.[2] Significant progress has been made toward peace and political stability in the country even in the face of significant challenges, such as a civil war that lasted over a decade and killed hundreds of thousands of Liberians; the Ebola virus crisis of 2014; and economic inflation. Over half of Liberians live below the national poverty line and a third live in extreme poverty, living on less than $1.90 per day.[3] These and other challenges have exacerbated existing problems within other sectors such as education, security and the economy.

Liberian women have been disproportionately affected by these challenges. High rates of sexual and gender-based violence are well documented, especially during Liberia's 14 years of civil war; only one in three Liberian women are literate; and women are often more significantly impacted by poverty and hunger compared to men.[4] Women holding decision-making positions is instrumental to addressing these issues; however, women face significant obstacles in attaining leadership positions.

Although Liberia's 2005 democratic transition saw the election of Africa's first woman head of state, Liberian women continue to face considerable challenges to their participation in political processes. In 2015, USAID's Liberia Electoral Access and Participation (LEAP) survey found that nearly 10 percent fewer women were registered to vote than men, 14 percent fewer women voted in the 2014 Senatorial elections and 17 percent fewer women engage in campaign activities. Indications from data from the 2017 elections indicate the gap is closing as increased numbers of women are participating in elections as voters, however, they still remain underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles, even after the 2017 election.

The Visionary Young Women in Leadership (VYWL) team conducted research to understand why women are underrepresented and to uncover new ways to encourage more of their peers to become more active in their communities, especially in leadership and decision-making positions.

Figure 3: VYWL Member Faith Blapooh interviews Deputy Police Chief Madame Sadatu Reeves

[4] SAS, 2012 Liberia Armed Violence Assessment; UNICEF, 2015, Youth and Adult Literacy Rates; World Food Program: Women and Hunger 2018

FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Research Objectives

VYWL's research on women's empowerment, conducted from January to June 2018, had two objectives:

1. To assess the current state of women's empowerment in Liberia by conducting a mapping of women leaders in various sectors. (Quantitative)

2. To identify, through in-person interviews, the common challenges that aspiring women leaders face and determine what attributes, characteristics or tools assisted current women leaders in attaining their positions. (Qualitative)

Quantitative Methodology

To measure women's political leadership and empowerment in Liberia, VYWL conducted a mapping exercise between January and June 2018. They first created a database of women leaders in each of four key sectors in government: executive, legislative, security and judicial. They gathered the names and information of leaders for the database through a mixture of open sources (official media releases, news organizations, etc.), interviews and information from other organizations such as the Elections Coordinating Committee (ECC), which tracked executive level appointments in the new government after the election. This information was used to both inform the mapping and to compare the number of female and male appointees to derive a percentage of female leaders in each sector.

After all leadership positions were compiled, VYWL coded the data, used USAID's Diamond Leadership Model (DLM) to analyze it and calculated a Women's Power Score (WPS), as outlined in the section below. Additional information about the DLM and WPS analysis can be found in Annex I.

Diamond Leadership Model (DLM)

Often the assessment of women's political empowerment is based solely on the percentages of women in certain political leadership positions, frequently focusing on the legislature and the executive. (USAID, 2016) USAID's Diamond Leadership Model (DLM) is a tool developed by USAID and Management Systems International (MSI) to measure women's political empowerment through four sectors—executive, legislative, judicial and security sectors—and not only analyzes the number of women in leadership positions in these sectors, but also assesses their level of power and influence by giving different positions a different weight to develop a "Women's Power Score" (WPS). (USAID, 2014a) (USAID, 2016)

LEGISLATIVE	EXECUTIVE	JUDICIAL[5]	SECURITY[6]	WEIGHT
% Party Leaders	% Cabinet + Vice President[7]	% Supreme Court Judges	% Upper Tier Officers	3
% Committee Heads + Chief Clerk[8]	% Top Technocrats	% Circuit Court Judges	% Middle Tier Officers	2
% Members of Parliament	% Top 10 Mayors	% Specialized Court Judges	% Lower Tier Officers	1
Diamond Leadership Model Indicators by Sector *Table Adapted from Women in Power Project Summary Report* *(USAID, 2016)*				

For this report, VYWL collectively established a scoring mechanism assigning a weighted number of 1-3 (three being the highest level of responsibility) to each leadership position. These weighted scores were then analyzed in each of the four sectors using 12 indicators outlined in the USAID report to produce a score for each sector. The WPS was calculated by adding all the scores for each sector together. The total WPS can be a score between 1 and 400, where 200 illustrates gender equality.[9] (USAID, 2016) (USAID, 2014a)

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[5] Originally the judicial indicators were Constitutional Judges, High Court Judges and at the lower level Appellate Judges. However, these indicators were adjusted to conform to the structure of the Liberian judicial system as reflected in the table above. For additional information, see "Mapping Results".

[6] In the original analysis, (USAID, 2014a and 2016), military and police scores should be calculated separately and then averaged together. However, because data was unavailable in the security sector (both military and police) at the time of this report, security sector scores are unable to be calculated.

[7] Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor is captured in this indicator.

[8] This indicator was amended to include the Chief Clerk position due to the level of responsibility for this position.

[9] For more information on the DLM and the WPS, please see Annex I as well as (USAID 2014a) and (USAID, 2016). For a discussion on the limitations of this methodology, please see "Discussion and Implications".

Qualitative Methodology

Once the data was collected and mapped for each of the sectors, the VYWL team conducted interviews with women leaders to garner additional information about leaders' career paths, challenges they face and their advice to younger women who aspire to become leaders.

To select the interviewees, VYWL reviewed the mapping database and identified a list of women leaders from the four sectors. Participants were chosen in part due to accessibility and availability for the VYWL research team in Monrovia. VYWL sent a letter to potential interviewees explaining the purpose of the research as well as listing the interview questions in advance. Seventeen interviews were conducted with women leaders from all four sectors, including a minister, members of the legislature, judges and security leaders. The data from the interviews was imported into a databank and analyzed.

MAPPING RESULTS

Executive

The October 2017 elections marked an important milestone in the consolidation of Liberia's democracy as it marked the first peaceful transfer of power between two democratically elected heads of state in more than 70 years. Liberians elected the ticket of President George Weah and Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor. After the election, the new administration appointed political positions from the national to the local level.

On the national level, only three of 19 (15.8 percent) cabinet-level positions are held by women.[10] However, the percentages of women's representation are higher for other positions within the ministries, with women holding 24.5 percent of the deputy minister positions and 25.9 percent of the assistant minister positions. When combined, women hold 25.4 percent of the deputy and assistant minister positions. These combined-level cabinet appointments will be referred to as "*top-level technocrats*" in the DLM analysis and in the figure below.

Liberia is comprised of 15 counties, and each county is led by an appointed superintendent. Of the 15 superintendent positions appointed as of June 2018, three are held by women (20 percent). On the local level, of the 30 mayoral positions appointed as of June 2018, 10 women were appointed (33.3 percent). Similarly, three of the 10 (30 percent) most populous cities in Liberia have women mayors.[11]

DLM Score for the Executive Sector: 21.4

Position	Total # Positions Available	# Male	# Female	% Male	% Female	Weight
Cabinet	19	16	3	84.2%	15.8%	3
Top-Level Technocrats*	134	100	34	74.6%	25.4%	2
Superintendents	15	12	3	80%	20%	2
Mayors**	30	20	10	66.7%	33.3%	1
Top 10 Mayors	10	7	3	70%	30%	1

Executive Sector Positions in Liberian Government 2018
*"Top-Level Technocrats" is inclusive of Assistant and Deputy Ministers
**Only reflective of mayoral positions appointed as of 1 June 2018 (ECC, 2018)

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[10] Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor is counted in this indictor as a top executive level position. Liberia has 18 ministers, but with the addition of the vice president as part of this indicator, the total has been raised to 19.
[11] The ten most populous cities identified by the 2008 Government of Liberia Census are: Monrovia, Ganta, Buchanan, Gbarnga, Kakata, Voinjama, Zwedru, Harbel, Pleebo, and Foya. (LISGIS, 2008: 12) Women have been appointed mayors of Voinjama, Zwedru, and Foya.

Legislative

Liberia has a bicameral legislature consisting of the Senate with 30 seats and the House of Representatives with 73 seats. Of the total 103 legislative seats available, as of 1 June 2018, only 11 of these seats (two Senators and nine members of the House of Representatives) are held by women; thus, women hold 10.7 percent of the seats in the combined Legislature of Liberia.

Women in the legislative sector also hold other positions, such as committee leadership and party leadership positions. Of the 20 legislative committees identified by the Women's Legislative Caucus (WLCL, 2018), three are chaired by a woman (15 percent).[12] The Chief Clerk of the Legislature is also a woman, and due to the level of responsibility of this position, VYWL included this mid-level position in the Committee Chairs and Chief Clerk indicator, raising the total percentage of women to 19 percent for this indicator. As another metric of women's empowerment in Liberia, the VYWL also measured political party leadership. Of the 26 political parties registered with the National Elections Commission (NEC) in Liberia, only one party is headed by a woman.[13]

DLM Score for the Legislative Sector: 10

Position	Total # Positions Available	# Male	# Female	% Male	% Female	Weight
Political Party Leaders	26	25	1*	96.2%	3.8%	3
Committee Chairs + Chief Clerk	21	17	4	81%	19%	2
Members of Legislature *(Combined House of Representatives and Senate)*	103	92	11	89.3%	10.7%	1

Legislative Sector Positions in Liberian Government 2018

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[12] If co-chairs were included in this analysis, the number would be increased to six.

[13] Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor is head of the NPP; however, because of the status of the party's transformation into a coalition, she is not counted in the legislative sector as a political party head. Instead Jewel Howard Taylor is counted in the "Minister" indicator in the executive sector.

Judicial

Liberia's top court is the Supreme Court, which encompasses one Chief Justice and four Associate Justices. Of the five justices on the Supreme Court, two are female (40 percent).

The next highest court in Liberia is the Circuit Court. There is one Circuit Court judge for each of the 15 counties in Liberia, plus an additional judge to handle the heavy case load in Montserrado County where Monrovia is located. Of the 16 Circuit Court judges, five are women (31.3 percent). (Momolu, 2018) The VYWL also looked at the percentage of women serving as judges in Liberia's Specialized Courts. To date, there are four women judges among the 35 Specialized Court Judges (11.4 percent). (Momolu, 2018)

Originally, the judicial indicators for the WPS included constitutional judges with a weight of three, high court judges with a weight of two, and appellate court judges with a weight of one. Because of the way the Liberian judicial system is structured, the amended WPS indicators are as follows:

- Constitutional Judges = Supreme Court: Weight of 3
- High Court Judges = Circuit Courts: Weight of 2
- Appellate Court = Specialized Courts: Weight of 1

DLM Score for the Judicial Sector: 32.3

Position	Total # Positions Available	# Male	# Female	% Male	% Female	Weight
Supreme Court Justices	5	3	2	60%	40%	3
Circuit Court Judges	16	11	5	68.7%	31.3%	2
Specialized Court Judges	35	31	4	88.6%	11.4%	1

Judicial Positions in Liberian Government 2018
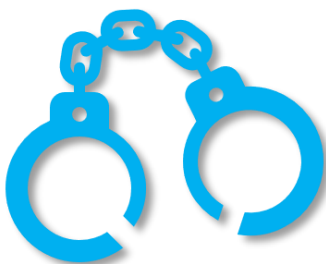
Security

This mapping exercise was only able to uncover a limited amount of data on the number of women leaders in the security sector, as well as the number of total positions in the security sector itself. As of June 2018, only three women leaders were identified in the security sector.

These leaders hold the following positions:

- Deputy Commissioner General of the Liberia Immigration Service
- Deputy Inspector General-Administration of the Liberia National Police
- Deputy Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces of Liberia

Because more information about the sector could not be obtained, the percentage of women in leadership roles could not be ascertained, and thus a DLM Security Sector Score could not be calculated. It is reasonable to assume that only three women leaders identified in the sector constitutes a considerably low percentage of the security sector positions.

Although current statistics on the number of leadership positions in the sector could not be verified, some sources report that in 2016, 17 percent of the Liberian National Police Force was female. (Black and Verveer, 2018) For comparison, women make up "less than 13 percent of most police departments" in the United States. (Asquith, 2016)

DLM Score for the Security Sector: Could Not Be Calculated

Liberia's WPS 2018 =
63

*Executive (21) + Legislative (10) + Judicial (32) Scores = Women's Power Score (WPS)
*Security score could not be calculated, thus a triangle (3-point) analysis was conducted

Figure 4: Members of the VYWL interview legislator Hon. Mariamu Fofana, District #4, Lofa

INTERVIEW RESULTS

The mapping provides a glimpse of women's empowerment today, but VYWL was also interested in understanding how more women can reach decision-making positions. To explore this, VYWL conducted 19 interviews to 1) Assess the common **challenges** women face in becoming leaders, 2) Understand which **characteristics** helped current women leaders reach their positions, and 3) Review the **advice** current women leaders would give to aspiring leaders.

Challenges

A multitude of challenges—many of which are familiar to women worldwide—exist for Liberian women who want to attain leadership positions, including familial, religious, educational and cultural barriers.

Culturally, in Liberia, men are the heads of families and are often decision-makers at work and at home. One interviewee said that as a result, some men feel they should be in charge and in control all times, and women in leadership positions threaten this cultural practice. Sexism in the work place, both before and after attaining leadership positions, was also identified as a significant barrier to women leaders.

Barriers at home and in families also exist. At home, one interviewee said, husbands can be overprotective which can limit the opportunities available to prospective women leaders. Women often are also expected to take on most domestic duties. Interviewees cited the difficulties of balancing a career and a family, including taking care of children. The expectations of women at home can lead to a lack of family and community support. Two of the interviewees stated that they eventually separated from husbands who were unsupportive of their career and leadership bids. Another woman did not did not become a leader because her parents were not supportive of her leadership goals and did not believe that girls should be educated. Fortunately, in this case, this current leader was able to persuade her parents and eventually she was given access to education.

Education was cited by women leaders as one of the largest barriers to leadership. Only one in three Liberian women are able to read much less finish primary and secondary education. (UNICEF, 2015) Many families still do not recognize the importance of "girl child education," especially in low-income areas where school fees are difficult to afford. Liberia is a low-income country, and many Liberian families are impoverished. (World Bank, 2016) Often if a family can afford school fees, male children are given priority over the girls to attend school. Interviewees noted that a lack of education creates external as well as internal challenges. Externally, aspiring leaders are perceived as less qualified than their often-educated male colleagues. Internally, a lack of education often contributes to lower levels of self-confidence, preventing potential leaders from taking risks and putting themselves forward for potential leadership opportunities. Additionally, the lack of education—especially on civics, the Liberian political system and potential leadership opportunities—creates apprehension about entering politics.

Interviewees noted that many of these challenges continue even after being elected or appointed to leadership positions. Sexism in the workplace remains, interviewees gave specific examples of how male colleagues continued to undermine their work while serving as leaders. One legislator contends that it is more difficult to get bills passed in the House of Representatives because some men do not respect her work because she is a woman. These and other challenges have led to struggles in passing legislation, issues with the development and implementation of new policies and have contributed to feelings of professional frustration.
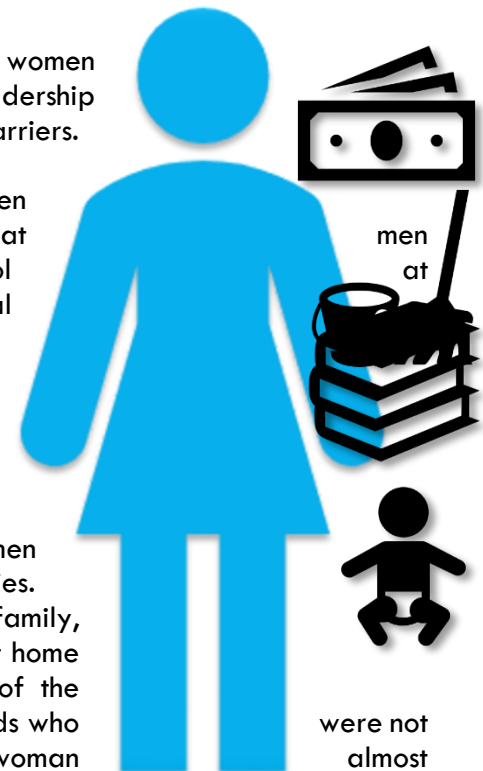
Liberian women leaders are also often the target of personal attacks on their character. One woman leader said that she was attacked by political rivals simply for being a single mother. Additionally, because of sexism and attempts to undermine their positions though personal attacks, some women leaders feel they must be more cautious, as their credibility and jobs could come under attack. One of the interviewees made the VYWL researchers wait for a significant amount of time outside of her office because she had misplaced the preliminary copy of the interview questions. The leader wanted to be absolutely certain that the VYWL team were indeed doing research and not sent by a political rival to set her up for attacks and "tarnish her reputation" by taking her answers out of context and making them public. Another leader told the team that she could only give them a few minutes of her time, but once convinced of the objectives and goals of the research, spent nearly an hour with the researchers.

Portrait of a Liberian Leader

Persistence: Not Willing to Give Up or Take 'No' for an Answer

In the interviews, the most notable collective trait of the women leaders was their persistence. Despite all the challenges facing them including poverty, lack of access to education, sexism, etc., their perseverance, tenacity and resilience was key. When confronted with a challenge, these women leaders pushed through or found ways to circumvent these challenges in creative ways.

"Perseverance is a requirement for achievement"

At a young age, one leader was able to persuade her family to support her education although they did not believe girls should go to school. Another woman had to wage not one, but two electoral campaigns to reach potential voters in her local community: 1) Her female target voters, and 2) The husbands and families of the women voters to persuade them to allow the women to vote for her.
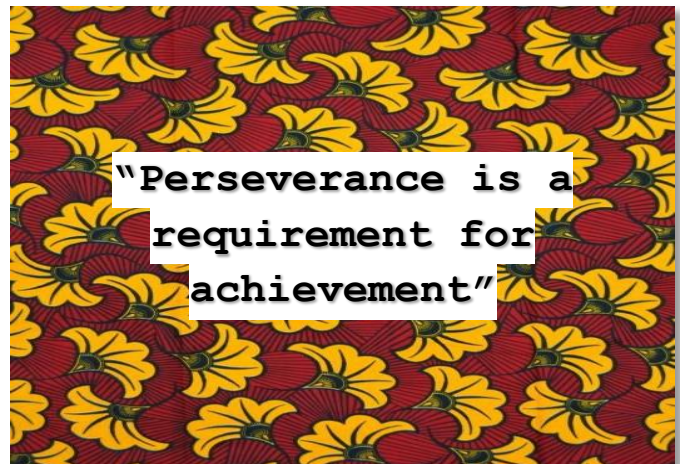
Two of the leaders had remarkable stories of overcoming not only cultural, familial, educational and financial barriers, but also the physical limitations of disabilities. As well, there is often a significant stigma surrounding disability in Liberia, and one of the interviewees was able to overcome this stigma to campaign and run successfully for elected office.

Support Networks

Even if interviewees were unable to rely on their families (husbands, parents, etc.) for support, nearly all of the leaders said they were lucky to find support elsewhere, such as a mentor, teacher,

or foster parent.[14] [15] All of the women interviewed recognized the importance of one-on-one support and mentorship.

In addition to the importance of mentorship and one-on-one support, the women leaders also placed a high importance on creating and sustaining networks from the grassroots to the national level. The leaders credited networks with introducing them to new supporters; facilitating learning from other leaders; and securing male allies.

Commitment to Local Communities

Figure 5: Members of the VYWL team

Remaining committed and connected to the people who the women leaders represent was another characteristic of many of the leaders interviewed. The leaders spoke of a sense of humility and authentic engagement with local communities such as keeping promises, visiting rural areas, listening and taking action.

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[14] Traditionally, "mentorship" in Liberia can mean financial support—paying for one's education, etc.; however, in this report, "mentorship" refers to an experienced person providing guidance or advice of a professional and sometimes personal nature.

[15] Foster parenting is a common practice in Liberia, where children from one family are hosted by another, often more financially secure, family.

For example, one of the leaders demonstrated her investment and commitment to a community she represents by spending her free time learning a local language spoken by a specific part of her district. She said she wanted to learn this language so that she could improve communications and better serve her people.

Passion + Actions Speak Louder Than Words

Another common trait of the interviewees was their passion about addressing issues coupled with a willingness to take action.

"You must inspire yourself"

Many of the interviewees cited specific examples of the hardships women face (poverty, sexual assault, education, etc.) as their motivation to become leaders. A majority of the interviewees had in some way already taken action to address issues in their communities before vying for an official leadership position. These actions included starting their own NGOs, foundations or educational institutions, providing scholarships to disadvantaged children (mostly girls) or informally mentoring other women in their professions. These women leaders did not wait to be recognized and did not pursue funding from international organizations, but instead jumped into action utilizing the time and resources available.

Education + Skills

Education makes leadership positions more attainable and accessible for women, and the interviewees emphasized the importance of finishing one's education. However, many Liberian women and girls do not have the opportunity to go to school or to complete their education. In the sample of women leaders interviewed for this report, those who did not have a formal education did not let this curtail their leadership bids, especially in legislative and security sectors.[16] These leaders were able to attain decision-making positions by highlighting other leadership skills or pursuing different types of educational opportunities. One woman leader running for office found that voters respected her and looked up to her for her other qualities, such as her connections to the community, understanding the day-to-day lives of the people she hoped to represent, her passion, confidence and her "logical" way of thinking. Another leader believed completing her education so important that she enrolled in night classes after being elected so that she could complete her education and "serve her constituents better."

Education also contributes to higher levels of confidence and lower levels of shyness. All of the women leaders who cited their lack of education as contributing to their shyness or lack of self-confidence found ways to overcome this challenge, most notably by building their capacities. Women leaders cited improving their public speaking skills as critical to their success. To build these skills, some of the leaders attended formal trainings, while others improved through practice. As time progressed, the women gained more confidence in their skills, spoke to larger groups, and became less shy and more confident public speakers.

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[16] Women in the judicial sector, however, have specific educational requirements to become judges.

Figure 6: VYWL Member Cynthia Loila shares information with women candidates at the Campaign Expo in June 2017

Advice for Aspiring Future Leaders

When asked what advice the women leaders would give to other women interested in attaining leadership positions, their advice was similar to the characteristics many of the leaders embodied. Below is a summary of their advice.[17]

Be Persistent: Always be persistent and keep pushing forward for what you want. Discover what you are passionate about and keep pushing until you achieve it. Be decisive and remain focused. Make change, even in male-dominated areas.

Be Self-Confident: Be tough, bold and self-confident. Act like no one is watching so that you can focus on your work. Turn a deaf ear to negativity. Remember to focus on the positive, not the negative. Own your space and believe that you can be anybody.

Be Passionate About Achieving Your Goals: Set achievable goals and believe in yourself in pursuit of your goals. Find your voice. Find something you are passionate about and change it. Be passionate about accomplishing your goals.

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[17] Statements of advice given by the interviewees were compiled and edited for clarity and consistency.

Be Continuously Learning: Always be inspired (especially to learn), take your education seriously and volunteer to build your capacity and skills whenever the opportunity arises.

Be Honest and Humble: Be honest, humble, respectful and selfless. Give back. Remember where you came from. Be committed to the people who believe in you.

"No one has an excuse to limit themselves"

Be Open to Networking: Network as much as you can. Make full use of potential networks and reach out to people who can help you to achieve your goals. Do not rely only on your friends and other women; you will need male allies too. Do not be shy, overcome it.

Be Accepting of Your Mistakes and Learn from Them: Do not let mistakes define you, your future or what you can achieve. Do not allow others to use your past mistakes against you. Mistakes are an opportunity to learn.

Be the Leader You Want to See: Lead by example; that is what will keep you going. Do not pretend to be someone you are not—be true to yourself. Leave a legacy and be visible.

Figure 7: VYWL team members interview Hon. Rosana Schaack, Representative District #1, Rivercess

DISCUSSION + IMPLICATIONS

Mapping and Women's Power Score

The results of the mapping and the subsequent DLM sector scores and Women's Power Score (WPS) provide an illustrative snapshot of the level of women's political leadership and empowerment in Liberia in 2018. Each sector score is a number between 1 and 100, with 100 being women occupying every position of power within that sector. The total **WPS is a number between 1 and 400, with 200 representing gender parity.**

Liberia's scores are as follows: **Executive 21.4, Legislative 10 and Judicial 32.3.** The security sector score could not be calculated. When these scores are combined, Liberia has a **triangular (three-point) Women's Power Score of 63.7.**

According to the scores, the **judicial sector has the highest level** of women's empowerment, with the Supreme Court composed of 40 percent women. The **executive sector has the next highest level** of women's empowerment, mostly due to the percentages of women on the mid-level indicators—top-level technocrats and top mayors, respectively. The **legislative sector is the lowest** of the three scores and has the

"Men should realize that Liberia is not a Poro society where only men do participate."

[The "Poro" society is a traditional training school for men where men are trained to serve as leaders and have dominance over women.]

most room for improvement. Notably, the number of women in the legislature is only 10.7 percent, and only one political party has a woman serving as political leader.
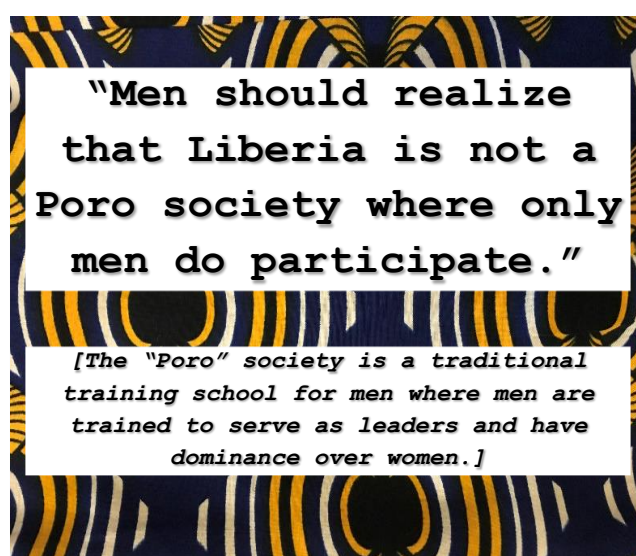
These scores will not change overnight, but there are certain actions government and party leaders can take in the short term to increase the number of women in leadership positions. Although the next national election will not take place until the Senate elections of 2020, sitting party and government leaders could, for example, appoint more women leaders in political parties and as

Liberian DLM Sector Score Comparison 2014 and 2018
(2014 Data from USAID 2014a)

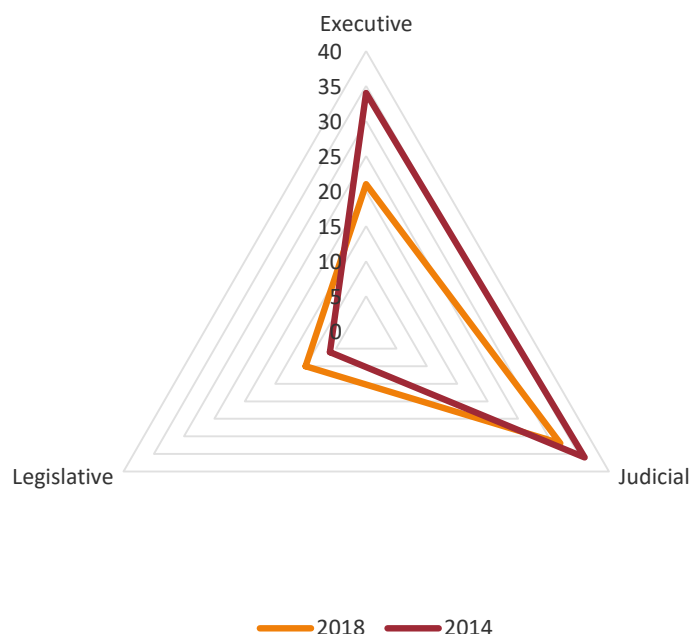| Country	Executive	Legislative	Judicial	Security	Total (Triangle) WPS
Liberia (2018)	21	10	32	N/A	63
Liberia (2014)	34	6	36	N/A	75

committee chairs. Similarly, in the short term, more top-level technocrats could be appointed in the executive sector as assistant and deputy ministers.

In 2014, USAID scored Liberia using the Diamond Leadership Model. Like in 2018, security sector information could not be obtained, and a triangle (three-point) analysis was conducted. (USAID, 2014a: 34-35) Liberia scores from these two years mirror each other, though Liberia has actually declined slightly in women's empowerment in the judicial and executive sectors since the 2014 report. However, due to potentially different methodological choices in adapting the original USAID indicators to the Liberian governmental structure, there are limitations to the conclusions one can draw from this comparison. (See "Limitations of Research")

When its scores are compared internationally, Liberia scores lower than most of the Sub-Saharan African countries examined by

Liberia Sector Score Comparison 2014 and 2018

(2014 Score from USAID, 2014a: 35)

USAID in 2014. (USAID, 2014a: 34-35) Because security data could not be compiled for this report, Liberia's scores were only compared to other countries which also omitted security data.

Thus, a triangle—not diamond—analysis was completed. Additionally, when comparing Liberia's 2018 scores to other country scores from 2014, just as Liberia's scores have changed over a four-year period, it is reasonable to assume that the other country scores have changed as well.

Rwanda, at a WPS of 114, has the highest score in this comparison, and power is almost equally balanced between the executive, legislative and judicial sectors. However, Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana more closely resemble Liberia, with the highest levels of women's empowerment concentrated in the judicial sector and then the executive sector. Overall, Liberia (2018) has a higher total WPS than Nigeria and the same WPS as Ghana.

Country DLM Scores by Sector – Sub-Saharan Africa Triangle (3-Point) Comparison					
(Country Comparison Data from USAID, 2014a)					
Country	**Executive**	**Legislative**	**Judicial**	**Security**	**Total (Triangle) WPS**
Liberia (2018)	21	10	32	N/A	63
Liberia (2014)	34	6	36	N/A	75
Kenya (2014)	26	16	34	N/A	76
Ghana (2014)	22	8	33	N/A	63
Nigeria (2014)	20	6	25	N/A	51
Rwanda (2014)	37	42	35	N/A	114

Sub-Saharan Africa Sector Score Comparison
Triangle (3-Point) Model
(2014 Country Data from USAID, 2014a: 34-35)
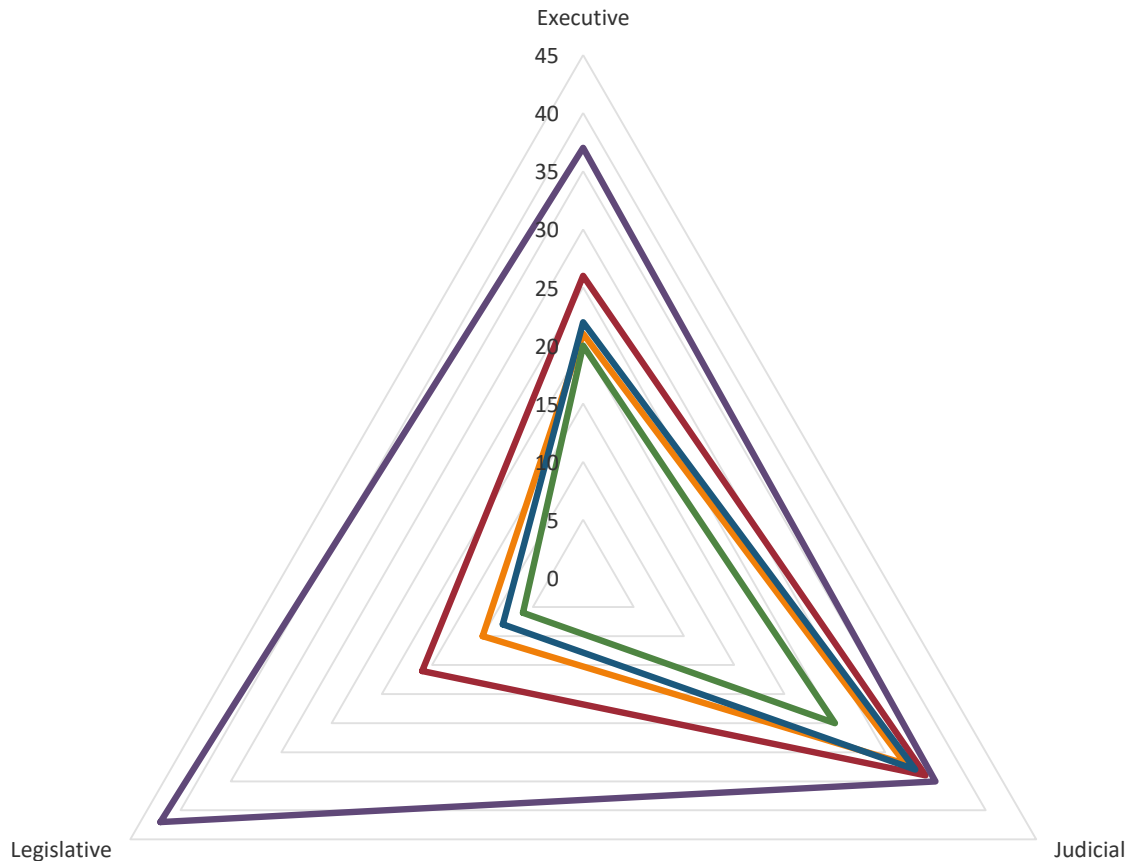
Legend: Liberia (2018), Kenya (2014), Ghana (2014), Nigeria (2014), Rwanda (2014)

When comparing Liberia to a sample of triangle analysis countries from the 2014 report from other regions, such as South Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, Liberia seems to fall more in the middle. (USAID, 2014a: 34-35) Liberia has more than double the WPS of Iraq and Lebanon, and Liberia's WPS is significantly higher than Ukraine, Nepal, Mexico and India according to information from 2014. (USAID, 2014a: 34-35)

The DLM sector scores and the Women's Power Score for Liberia 2018 are only baseline numbers. These scores highlight the gap between gender parity in leadership positions, however, the numbers do not explain the causes, effects and ways forward to address this gap in leadership. For this, the second part of the research, the qualitative piece, is more illustrative.

Country DLM Scores by Sector – Global Triangle (3-Point) Sample Comparison					
(Country Comparison Data from USAID, 2014a: 34-35)					
Country	**Executive**	**Legislative**	**Judicial**	**Security**	**Total (Triangle) WPS**
Liberia (2018)	21	10	32	N/A	63
Liberia (2014)	34	6	36	N/A	75
Colombia (2014)	27	15	19	N/A	61
Lebanon (2014)	3	5	6	N/A	14
India (2014)	9	24	5	N/A	39
Iraq (2014)	3	9	0	N/A	12
Mexico (2014)	18	16	19	N/A	52
Nepal (2014)	8	20	7	N/A	35
Philippines (2014)	25	20	27	N/A	72
Ukraine (2014)	15	11	20	N/A	46

Interviews

Many of the challenges women in Liberia face are not new and not surprising. However, the ways in which current women leaders confronted these challenges can equip aspiring leaders, implementers and donors with useful information on how to increase women's political empowerment in Liberia.

Aspiring leaders should prioritize education.
> Education provides potential women leaders with knowledge, confidence and often increases their credibility. It is much more difficult to attain leadership positions without an education, and education is seen as so important that leaders who have not completed their education often continue to acquire education while occupying leadership roles.

Figure 8: VYWL Member Esther Sackie talking to young girls about staying in school

Lack of education is an obstacle to leadership, but it is not an insurmountable one.

Women often see education as a binary: With education, leadership is possible; without it, leadership is not possible. However, it seems that though this perception exists, women—with the exception of the judicial sector —can reach leadership positions without a formal education by continuing their education throughout their lives and by emphasizing the many other skills important to being a good leader.

Confidence is increased through building skills and knowledge.

Internal barriers for women vying for leadership positions include shyness, lack of self-confidence or apprehension about politics because of the mystique surrounding leadership. However, many of the women interviewed were able to overcome these barriers through building skills, including learning how to more confidently speak in public, better understanding the Liberian political system and/or investing in their education in adulthood.

Never give up.

Persistence, tenacity and resilience are important traits. The challenges facing Liberian women are large and unyielding. Those who are able to overcome these challenges often do so through sheer will and refusal to give up.

One-on-one mentorship makes a difference.

Many of the women leaders interviewed had someone in their life—a partner, a teacher, a mentor—to rely on and to discuss options with. For young leaders, mentorship is key. Not only are women mentors important, but even having women more visible in leadership positions in a public setting encourages women's political participation on the lower levels. (Barnes and Burchard, 2013)

All women need support – aspiring leaders and women decision-makers.

Faced with sexism, perceptions of being unqualified and attacks on their character, all women could benefit from support networks and additional skill-building wherever they are in their career path. Women leaders need strategies and skills to help them stay the course and overcome the barriers that prevent women from creating change.

Utilize diverse networks.

Larger support networks are essential, as these networks assist women leaders in everything from voter/constituent contact, to fundraising, to policy ideas. Many of the interviewees also emphasized the importance of male allies. In addition to formal networks, such as the Women Legislative Caucus of Liberia, diverse networks of women from different sectors could help women leaders achieve their goals. For example, if a member of the House of Representatives is trying to pass a bill related to the economy, it would be helpful to work with a diverse network of women from business and the media to develop policy and conduct legislative advocacy.

An authentic and regular connection to communities is a strength.

The interviewees highlighted a sense of honesty, humility as well as a sense of "remembering where you came from," especially when communicating with communities. One common criticism of national leaders in Liberia is that when they reach a leadership position, they move to Monrovia and forget about the people of the communities who they represent or who supported them. Many women have to overcome significant challenges to reach leadership positions and they prioritize honestly, authentically and regularly connecting with communities and rural Liberians. This relationship gives them credibility within communities, helps them stand out among their peers in leadership positions and makes them more responsive leaders.

Figure 9: Members of the VYWL and Judge Comfort Natt

Limitations of Research

There are a number of limitations to the mapping and the DLM analysis. First, the inaccessibility of data and lack of information was a challenge for the mapping. In addition to being unable to find information about the security sector positions, information about the number of leadership positions in the other sectors was also difficult to find and varied according to different sources. Additionally, during the first months of the new Liberian government, many executive positions remain fluid. An exact number is difficult to determine, but VYWL estimated the numbers of positions to the best of the group's ability using reliable sources, such as the ECC's database of post-election appointments. (ECC, 2018)

There were also challenges in comparing Liberia's 2018 scores to its scores from 2014, as well as scores from other countries. First, as the indicators had to be adjusted and adapted to fit the Liberian governmental structure, the researchers could not confirm whether the changes to the indicators VYWL made in 2018 were the same indicator amendments made in the 2014 report. Thus, there are limitations to the conclusions one can draw from comparing Liberia's 2014 and 2018 scores, and as such the 2018 data should be considered as the baseline. Additionally, when comparing Liberia's scores to the scores of other countries, the only data available for comparison was from

2014. Just as Liberia's scores changed over the past four years, it is reasonable to assume the other country scores have changed as well.

Variations in the responsibility levels of each individual position is not accurately reflected in the DLM model and sector scores. For example, an associate justice of the Supreme Court has the same weight as the chief justice. Additionally, only 12 indicators across the different sectors are considered for the calculation of the DLM sector scores and the Women's Power Score, which do not include all potentially relevant leadership positions.

The interviews were helpful in assessing the challenges, characteristics and ways forward for women leaders. However, because of unavoidable accessibility and availability issues, the interviews were mostly conducted with women leaders in the greater Monrovia area. For future research, the interviews could include women from the rural areas and those serving in county-level leadership positions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After reviewing the results of the women's empowerment mapping as well as the interviews conducted with women leaders in Liberia, VYWL has a number of general recommendations to increase women's political empowerment in Liberia by increasing the number of women leaders while also empowering the women leaders currently in leadership positions.

Keep Girls in School

Education makes leadership positions more attainable for women and contributes to the effectiveness of women leaders already in these positions. Therefore, and not surprisingly, keeping girls in school is extremely important to women's empowerment.

Keeping girls in school should be a priority not only for the new Liberian government, but for all Liberian citizens. Women leaders and male allies from civil society, political parties, media and the private sector need to come together to wage a broad-based campaign to change the cultural attitudes about girl child education, to lobby the government to make it a policy and budgetary priority and to make it a topic for discussion in communities across the country.

To this end, the VYWL team aspires to partner with women leaders from the study to hold roundtable events and discussion groups in high schools and university campuses to highlight the importance of education, to engage young women on leadership and to raise awareness about the need for women in leadership across the multiple areas of governance.

Bridge the Policy Gap

Ongoing research and the development of policy options are necessary to propose solutions and address issues effectively. Women in the legislature as well as women in all areas of society need quality information and a solid foundation of policy support to aid in the drafting of bills, the creation and implementation of advocacy campaigns and the development of policy priorities. VYWL researchers have noticed a gap in policy and research on issues relating to women and their families, and see an opportunity to close the gap by providing this policy support. To provide this support, the VYWL team hopes to continue to increase their capacity in policy development, advocacy and gender-responsive budgeting to support policy alternatives and inclusive policy dialogues. The VYWL team believes that women leaders in the executive, legislative, security and judicial sectors of government would benefit from this type of support.

Mentorship

To increase the number of women in leadership positions, more young women need to be supported and encouraged to take on future leadership roles. However, many women do not know where to start. Some women struggle to affect change within their organizations. Other women, once obtaining a leadership position, often find themselves in the minority in terms of gender and are challenged to exert influence to have an impact. The VYWL would like to advocate for a mentorship program that connects senior, successful women decision-makers with less experienced young women or aspiring young leaders. Mentors would share with mentees their professional experiences

and lessons learned to help young women navigate their own individual path to leadership and offer a relationship of support and advice on professional development.

The mentorship program could begin with career development sessions in high schools and universities to motivate students, especially women, to think about their future career paths and provide the opportunity to see women role models in leadership positions. Research has shown that merely seeing women in leadership positions can have an impact on increasing women's participation. (Barnes and Burchard, 2013) These career sessions would also provide young women with information about leadership, options for potential career paths and an overview of civics and the Liberian political system.

Figure 10: VYWL Member Angelique Myers talks to young women at the University about the importance of women leadership

Judging by the sample of women leaders interviewed for this report, there would be no shortage of mentors. The women leaders who were interviewed for this report understood the importance and benefits of mentorship and were prepared to step into mentorship roles.

Leadership Skills and Ongoing Training

In order for more Liberian women to win elections, become more visible, get appointed to leadership positions and become more effective leaders, they need to continue to hone their skill sets as well as build cross-sector networks. Successful election and advocacy campaigns also require effective fundraising skills.

Women's leadership programs that build skills, empower more women, build stronger women's networks and create a sustainable pipeline of trained women leaders should be implemented on a regular basis, not only during an election year. The VYWL team believes that an ongoing leadership program would provide a more holistic approach by including women from all sectors and could utilize training-of-trainer models; train more women leaders on fundraising, public speaking and other critical leadership skills; and create stronger, more diverse networks that could support women leaders from every sector.

Questions for Future Discussion

As part of the above programming recommendations, VYWL proposes a series of questions to inspire and inform debate around women's empowerment and leadership in Liberia.

- Is there a particular path to success for women leaders in Liberia?

- What are the most effective ways to increase the number of women in leadership positions in each sector?

- What changes need to be made in Liberian society to enable more women to reach decision-making positions?

- Becoming a leader and having power to make change is the first step. But many women in leadership face challenges to effect change. How do we help women leaders take the next step and create real, lasting change? (i.e. change policy, implement and enforce new laws, etc.)

- If Liberia had 50 percent women and 50 percent men in leadership, how might that change Liberia?

ANNEX I: Calculating the Women's Power Score (WPS) for Liberia

__The content of this Annex has been taken from and adapted from the Women in Power Project Summary Report (2016) and the report, Women's Leadership as a Route to Greater Empowerment: Report on the Diamond Leadership Model (2014a)

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The WPS for Liberia was calculated using figures collected through the VYWL mapping and expressed via 12 indicators named in the Diamond Leadership Model (USAID, 2014a and 2016). Amendments to the indicators can be found in the footnotes below.

Figure 11: Members of VYWL interview Assistant Minister of Gender Mamensie Kabba

Indicators

LEGISLATIVE	EXECUTIVE	JUDICIAL[18]	SECURITY[19]	WEIGHT
% Party Leaders	% Cabinet + Vice President[20]	% Supreme Court Judges	% Upper Tier Officers	3
% Committee Heads + Chief Clerk[21]	% Top Technocrats	% Circuit Court Judges	% Middle Tier Officers	2
% Members of Parliament	% Top 10 Mayors	% Specialized Court Judges	% Lower Tier Officers	1
Diamond Leadership Model Indicators by Sector *Table Adapted from Women in Power Project Summary Report* *(USAID, 2016)*				

The indicators are percentages of women in each position, which means that for the score to be accurate, the total number of appointed positions must be accurate. Obtaining accurate numbers of the total positions available and the total positions filled was difficult, especially as of June 2018, the new government was still in the process of making appointments. Additionally, the open sources available at times differed on the total number of positions. The percentages were calculated using the details of the women's mapping conducted by VYWL and comparing it with the total number of appointed positions as calculated by the ECC (2018). Where figures did not meet the criteria for accuracy or were not available, such as in the security sector, accurate percentages could not be calculated and thus a WPS could not be calculated.

Once these indicators were established, they were weighted to illustrate the power of women leaders at different levels. The weighted scores in each sector were calculated by using the below:

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[18] Originally the judicial indicators were Constitutional Judges, High Court Judges, and at the lower level Appellate Judges. However, these indicators were adjusted to conform to the structure of the Liberian judicial system as reflected in the table above. For additional information, see "Mapping Results".

[19] In the original analysis, (USAID, 2014a and 2016), military and police scores should be calculated separately and then averaged together. However, because data was unavailable in the security sector (both military and police) at the time of this report, security sector scores are unable to be calculated.

[20] Vice President Jewel Howard Taylor is captured in this indicator, although she is not a minister.

[21] This indicator was amended to include the Chief Clerk position due to the level of responsibility for this position.

Scores

✱ Legislative Score =

$$\frac{(\% \text{ Party Leaders} \times 3) + (\% \text{ Committee Heads/Chief Clerk} \times 2) + (\% \text{ National Legislators} \times 1)}{6}$$

✱ Executive Score =

$$\frac{(\% \text{ Cabinet Ministers/Vice President} \times 3) + (\% \text{ Top Technocrats} \times 2) + (\% \text{ Top 10 Mayors} \times 1)}{6}$$

✱ Judicial Score =

$$\frac{(\% \text{ Constitutional Judges} \times 3) + (\% \text{ Circuit Court Judges} \times 2) + (\% \text{ Specialized Court Judges} \times 1)}{6}$$

✱ Security Score =

$$\frac{(\% \text{ Top Tier Officers} \times 3) + (\% \text{ Mid-Tier Officers} \times 2) + (\% \text{ Lower-Tier Officers} \times 1)}{6}$$

Each of the above scores would yield a number between 0-100. **The sum of these scores is the Women's Power Score (WPS).** The WPS can range from 0 to 400, and a **score of 200** would illustrate gender equality.

ANNEX II: Interview Questions

The questions below were asked at interviews with women leaders in the four sectors analyzed by this report.

Interview Questions:

1. Can you name a person who has had a tremendous impact on you as a leader? How and why did this person impact your career or development as a leader?
2. How did you decide to pursue the career that you are working in today? Was there a key moment or event that helped you decide on your career path?
3. What are the most difficult decisions that you face daily as a leader in your area of work?
4. What advice would you give to a young woman going into a leadership position for the first time?
5. Which one thing do you wish you'd done differently? What's one key leadership lesson that you've learned along the way? What used to be your biggest weakness when you were starting out in your career?
6. What do you think are the most important traits of successful women leaders today? [What is the most important characteristic that every leader – both male and female - should possess?]
7. What are you most proud of in your career?
8. What is the biggest career risk you have ever taken?
9. As a female leader, what has been the most significant barrier in your career? Have you ever encountered challenges in your career because you are a woman? How did you handle it?
10. Do you have any advice on how to live a balanced life between work and personal commitments?
11. Did you have a mentor when you were starting out in your career? Would you be willing to be a mentor to a young woman who is interested in a career in [interviewee's profession]?

Other Information

The VYWL researchers also collected biographical and personal information about the interviewees, such as education level attained, county of origin, age, career background, et al.

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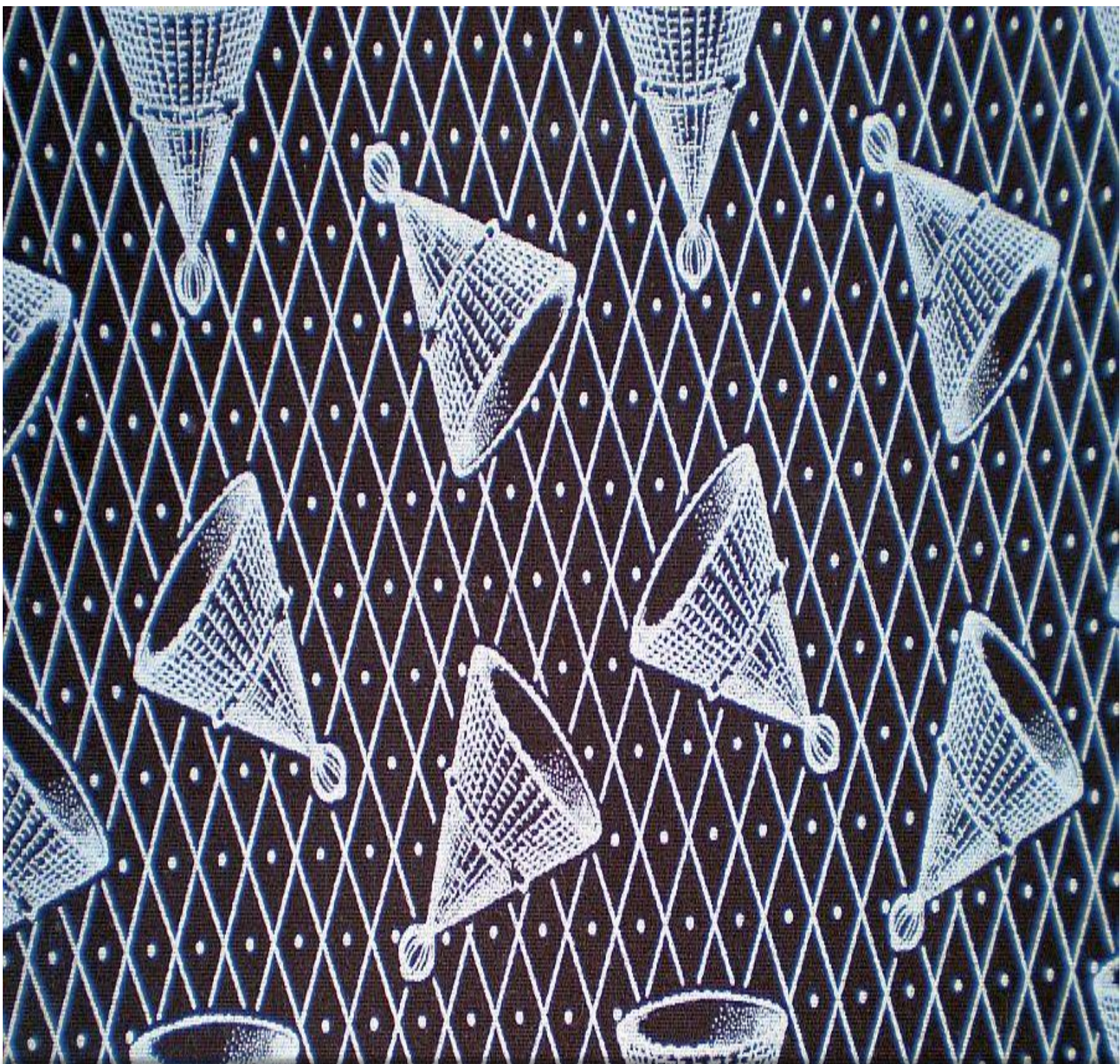WFP (2013) World Food Programme: Liberia Country Programme 2013-2017.

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