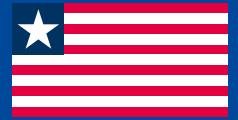




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Profile and Analysis of Youth, Gender and Land Related Conflicts in Bong and Lofa Counties, Liberia

For the joint FAO-ILO-WFP project
Sustaining Peace and Improving Social Cohesion
through the Promotion of
Rural Employment Opportunities for
Youth in Conflict-Prone Areas
in Liberia funded by the
UN Peacebuilding Fund



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



United Nations
Peacebuilding



World Food
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Foreword

Since early 2019, ILO, FAO and WFP have been jointly implementing the project “Sustaining peace and improving social cohesion through the promotion of rural employment opportunities for youth in conflict-prone areas” funded by the UN Peacebuilding Fund. The project is implemented through two key outcomes:

1. Young women and men have increased access to local conflict resolution mechanisms, with a focus on land disputes, and become active agents of peace; and
2. Rural young women and men have access to sustainable agricultural livelihoods addressing key drivers of conflict.

Under outcome 1, the project is supporting youth participation in peacebuilding at the community level, works to ensure that young women and men have increased access to land-conflict resolution mechanisms as a vehicle for youth-inclusive peacebuilding, and provides both technical and material support for youth to become peace champions and ambassadors.

In this context, the present study was conducted to map and document land-, youth- and gender-related drivers of conflicts in the Lofa and Bong counties of Liberia and update the conflict profile in both communities. It builds on a survey among youth representatives and relevant stakeholders, key informant interviews, focus group discussions as well as secondary literature.

The study aims to inform project implementation and provide insights for other national and international actors active in the area of socio-economic approaches to sustaining peace and social cohesion in Liberia.

Findings of the study were presented to national counterparts, project partners and beneficiaries during a validation meeting organized on Wednesday, 26 February 2020, in Monrovia, Liberia.

We would like to express our gratitude to those who have contributed to the development of this study, in particular Mr. Stephen Ganawa, Mr. Felix Rüdiger, Mr. Dino Corell, Mr. Salif Massalay, Ms. Nieves Thomet and Mr. David Dorkenoo. A special thank you to our project partners FAO and WFP as well as to the Secretariat for the Liberia Multi-Partner Trust Fund for their valuable feedback and collaboration, as well as the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs for supporting the publication of this analysis.

Executive Summary

This study informs, and is part of, the UN Peacebuilding Fund project “Sustaining peace and improving social cohesion through the promotion of rural employment opportunities for youth in conflict-prone areas”, implemented jointly by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). Its findings serve to support the analytical basis upon which project activities are designed and implemented, and the participation of local stakeholders throughout the project’s components.

The first section introduces the purpose, scope and methodology of the study. The study describes and explains the age and gender dimensions of land disputes and related youth violence by identifying their main drivers in Bong and Lofa counties of Liberia. Its empirical findings build on data collected from interviews, surveys and focus group discussions, with a total of 202 study participants, as well as a comprehensive desk review. On this basis, it formulates recommendations that will help the main partners – the FAO, the ILO and the WFP – and all the stakeholders involved in successfully planning and implementing further project activities, as well as designing future projects focused on socio-economic approaches to peacebuilding in the area.

Section 2 provides an overall socio-economic profile of the two counties and explains the main causes of conflict. It contains original data on the two communities and leads to some important conclusions. As regards survey participants’ “main concerns” in respect of youth and women’s development, the findings confirm that the counties face a dual challenge of economic despair (unemployment at 33.7 per cent and economic hardship/poverty at 15 per cent) and non-inclusive decision-making structures (20 per cent), particularly with regard to land disputes (21 per cent). Similarly, survey respondents in Bong and Lofa counties named land disputes as the main cause of conflict in their communities (37 per cent), followed by youth unemployment (33 per cent), youth/women’s marginalization (16 per cent) and traditions/religious practices (14 per cent). This shows that the project’s overall approach of combining young women and men’s access to governance of land disputes with socio-economic empowerment meets the demands and aspirations of local youth and other community members. This section of the study also finds that existing conflict resolution mechanisms are largely considered effective, but that there are opportunities for the project to build on.

Section 3 provides a detailed analysis of the project’s *main problem of interest*: the age and gender dimensions of land disputes and resulting youth violence. It describes the problem at hand and identifies the *distant* root causes and main drivers of the problem.

What is the main problem of interest? Years after the end of the Liberian civil war, recurrent community-level conflicts (sometimes violent) in the two counties have largely metamorphosed into disputes over land boundaries and fairer access to land, and land

use and leasing. These conflicts run not only along ethnic lines, as often emphasized, but also have age and gender dimensions. Firstly, respondents confirmed that, where access to land is concerned, youth and local authorities have often resorted to violence. Secondly, young unemployed men, in particular, appear to be perpetrators of violence in cases where members of their families are affected by land disputes and dispute-resolution mechanisms are inadequate. Thirdly, given that young women and men are excluded from having a fair share of fertile land – the most important resource for licit, sustainable livelihoods – and from access to dispute resolution mechanisms, they revert to illicit and harmful alternatives, such as illegal mining, illegal logging and other criminal activities. Fourthly, in the specific case of young women, it can be argued that their being barred from land ownership and dispute resolution not only excludes them economically, but, given their economic dependency, makes them more vulnerable to the common phenomenon of gender-based and sexual violence.

What are the drivers of conflict? The study argues that two main factors explain the recurrence of land disputes with age and gender dimensions, and the related agitation and violence:

- ▶ **A lack of socio-economic opportunities for young women and men, and**
- ▶ **Grievances over weak and exclusive state and non-state governance and land dispute resolution.**

This explanation builds on a triangulation of carefully collected quantitative and qualitative evidence, and provides the project with an important analysis for tackling the main drivers of the age- and gender-related dimensions of land disputes and the related youth violence.

Section 4 expands on how exactly the project could do this going forward. It summarizes the main findings, and makes recommendations for the project, revisiting the project's design and planned interventions in the light of the study results. It finds that the overall project approach, as outlined in the project document, is well suited to contribute to peace and resilience in the project communities.

The study provides the project team and partners, relevant project stakeholders, PBF officials and all other interested actors with the following main recommendations:

- ▶ Focus community-based participatory planning processes on promoting a shared understanding of the problem and finding viable entry points for solutions (Outputs 1.1 and 1.2.a)
- ▶ Strengthen the overall capacity and inclusiveness of “single-purpose” institutions, such as the statutory land authority, and relevant traditional authorities, for managing land distribution and sales, and for solving disputes (Outputs 1.2.b and 1.2.d);
- ▶ Ensure the inclusion of young women and men in “multi-purpose” peacebuilding institutions and strengthen the links of these institutions to land dispute resolution (Outputs 1.2.b, 1.2.c and 1.2.d);

- ▶ Strengthen young women and men's abilities to take part in the above-mentioned institutions and other governance structures for peacebuilding (relevant for all outputs under Outcome 1);
- ▶ Strengthen the evidence base regarding the contribution to peace and social cohesion made by programmes focusing on socio-economic development, dispute resolution and women's empowerment;
- ▶ Strengthen beneficiaries' access to the most needed agricultural skills and assets (relevant for Outcome 2);
- ▶ Consider to what extent non-agricultural sources of income can be generated (relevant for Outcome 2);
- ▶ Target young beneficiaries from different ethnicities and religious backgrounds, and ensure gender equality;
- ▶ Ensure that the two project outcomes are interlinked (for example, same beneficiaries targeted) (relevant for the linkages between Outcomes 1 and 2);
- ▶ Use this study's findings as a baseline for a subsequent monitoring and evaluation of the project's contribution to employment and peace-related outcomes.

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1. Introduction

This study informs, and is part of, the UN Peacebuilding Fund project “Sustaining peace and improving social cohesion through the promotion of rural employment opportunities for youth in conflict-prone areas”, implemented jointly by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). Its findings serve to support the analytical basis on which project activities are designed and implemented, and the participation of local stakeholders throughout the project’s components.

Background of the study

The project entitled “Strengthening the role of youth in reducing conflict through the promotion of rural employment in conflict-prone areas” aims to sustain peace by addressing two interlinked root causes of conflict in Liberia, namely grievance over insufficient participation on the part of young women and men in local dispute resolution, and lack of employment and livelihood opportunities for rural youth. Land disputes have been a major driver of fragility in post-war Liberia, particularly in the two counties of Bong and Lofa, where the project is active. Following massive conflict-induced displacements, land-related disputes are particularly concentrated in these two neighboring counties in the north-west of the country, which were particularly hard hit by the civil war. Risks of resurging conflict, as identified by Liberians in a major 2017 survey on peacebuilding,¹ are particularly high in both regions. According to the survey, land disputes and youth agitation remain contentious factors in the country. To sustain a youth-inclusive peace and improve social cohesion in the conflict-prone counties of Liberia, the project focuses on two interrelated outcomes:

Outcome 1: Young women and men have increased access to local conflict resolution mechanisms, with a focus on land disputes, and become active agents of peace.

In line with Government peacebuilding priorities, the project will support youth participation in peacebuilding at the community level, work to ensure that young women and men have increased access to land-conflict resolution mechanisms as a vehicle for youth-inclusive peacebuilding, and provide both technical and material support for youth to become peace champions and ambassadors.

Outcome 2: Rural young women and men have access to sustainable agricultural livelihoods so as to address key drivers of conflict.

As well as aiming to improve access to land, the project will promote tangible peace dividends for young women and men, focusing on decent farm and other jobs in rural areas, by providing skills and entrepreneurial training and by improving the management

¹ Liberia Peacebuilding Office, Ministry of Internal Affairs 2017: Mapping opportunities for the consolidation of peace in Liberia.

and productive capacities of youth-based agricultural cooperatives and enterprises through value-chain development.

The project outcomes and outputs are linked by the following theory of change:

IF young women and men have more and better access to local (land) conflict resolution mechanisms and to sustainable rural employment and livelihood opportunities, THEN young people will be able to act as active agents and messengers of peace, and be less likely to be affected by drivers of violence, BECAUSE they are capacitated to participate actively in local conflict resolution, and feelings of social injustice and grievance are reduced.

Under Outcome 1, this study aims to map and document land-, youth- and gender-related drivers of conflict by performing the following activities:

- ▶ Activity 1.1.1. Carry out a scoping exercise to map youth-, gender- and land-related conflicts in the project communities, as well as factors limiting young men and women's involvement in peacebuilding and conflict prevention and resolution;
- ▶ Activity 1.1.2. Update the conflict profile in the selected communities with community and youth participation.

Beyond its use for the purposes of the project, the study aims to provide valuable insights for other national and international actors active in the area of socio-economic approaches to peacebuilding in Liberia.

Organization of the study:

This study is organized as follows: this first section introduces the purpose, scope and methodology of the study. Section 2 provides an overall profile of the two counties, and in particular the six communities concerned, covering the broad socio-economic context and the basic causes of conflict. Against this background, Section 3 provides a detailed analysis of the *main problem of interest*: the age and gender dimensions of land disputes and resulting youth violence. It describes the problem at hand and identifies the main drivers of the problem. Section 4 summarizes the findings and makes recommendations for the project, revisiting the project's design and planned interventions in the light of the study results.

Purpose of the study:

The main purpose of the study is to map the age and gender dimensions of land-related conflicts in the Lofa and Bong counties of Liberia.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Determine the relative significance of the main sources of income (land sales/allocations/distributions, mining, subsistence farming and petty trading) in the project communities in Bong and Lofa counties, with a particular focus on young women and men;
2. Identify the root causes of land-related conflicts, with a special concern for how they affect young women and men in the project communities, focusing on:
 - a. The main socio-economic drivers of conflict, such as a lack of contact and opportunities, and the existence of grievances; and
 - b. the resulting conflict dynamics, with a focus on land-related conflicts and the role of young women and men therein;
3. Identify the characteristics, interests and strategies of the main stakeholders affected by land-related conflicts and conflict resolution processes in the project communities;
4. Examine the level of stakeholder involvement in conflict prevention and management procedures in the project communities of Bong and Lofa counties;
5. Make recommendations for the project moving forward.

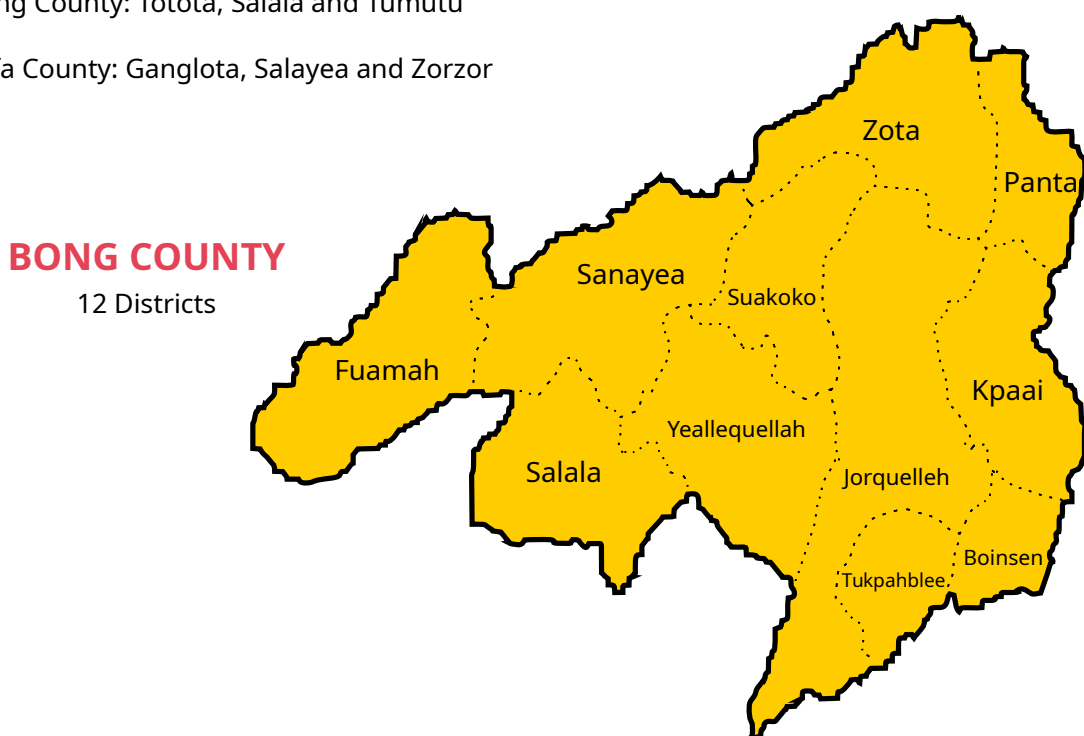
Geographical scope of the study:

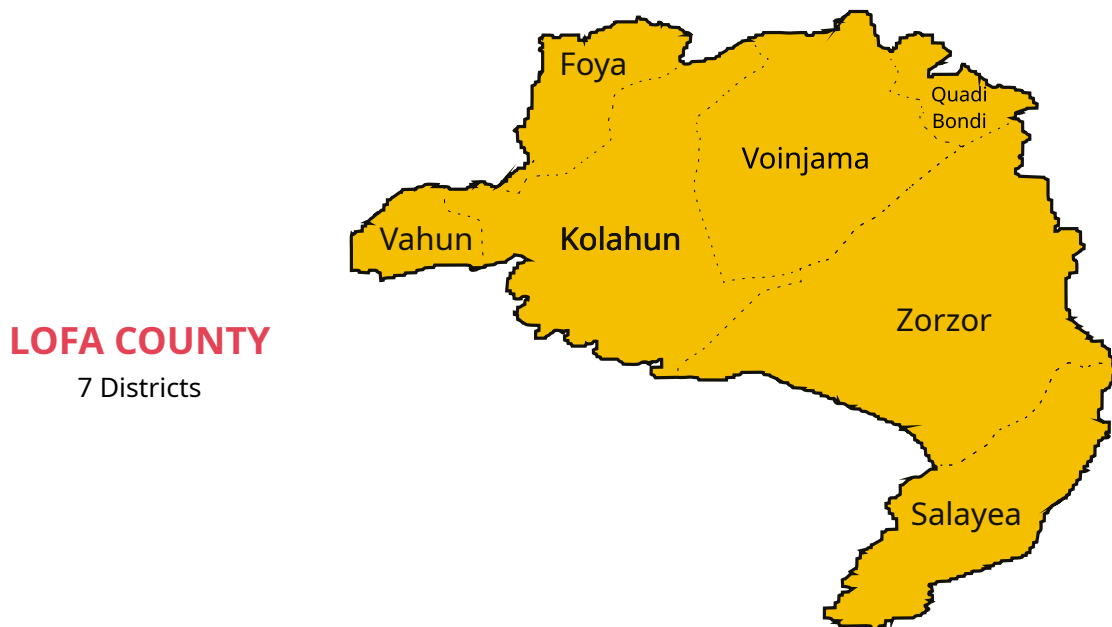
In line with the PBF project's focus, this study has mapped the land-, youth- and gender-related drivers of conflict in a total of six communities in Bong and Lofa counties:

The targeted communities include:

Bong County: Totota, Salala and Tumutu

Lofa County: Ganglota, Salayea and Zorzor





Methodology and Limitations of the Study:

The study adopted a mixed-method approach, triangulating qualitative and quantitative data, as well as conducting a review of secondary literature.

Questionnaire surveys: 92 surveys, including closed-ended and open-ended questions, were conducted with youth representatives and core stakeholders in the community. The closed-ended survey items lend themselves most directly to descriptive statistical analysis and can be used to establish the project's baseline indicators, as specified in the project document and the terms of reference (TOR) of this study.

Key informant interviews: 14 interviews, based on open-ended questions, were conducted with commissioners, chiefs, mayors, youth leaders,² traditional and religious leaders, and officials of the GOL and the Peacebuilding Office. The answers were coded using qualitative-content analysis and are presented in narrative form.

Focus group discussions: The mapping process included twelve focus group discussions (FGDs) comprising 96 direct programme beneficiaries, with two FGDs for each of the six selected communities. The FGDs were structured using open-ended questions, while the answers were coded using qualitative-content analysis and are presented in narrative form.

Of the 202 study participants, 69 per cent were male, 31 per cent female. Thirty-six per cent of the respondents were 15-29 year olds (see the Appendix for a detailed break-down).

² Following UNSC Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security, and in line with the project document, this study defines youth as 18-29 years old, but also uses ILO data on youth employment, which defines youth as between ages 15-24.

Primary data from the quantitative-content analysis of the FGDs and closed-ended survey responses were analyzed and documented using SPSS software, MS Excel and MS Word.

The rationale of this methodology was to obtain a fair and balanced empirical overview of conflict phenomena in the target communities. Some key stakeholders in Bong and Lofa were unreachable due to farming activities, family issues, weather conditions and the poor road network. Some traditional and local authorities were unwilling to respond to the interview questions for political, social or traditional reasons. The non-random selection of participants also led to a slight misrepresentation of the actual gender composition of the targeted communities, with more men than women interviewed (see Annex). Despite these minor shortcomings, the study's internal validity – in particular, the quality of the analysis of the socio-economic situation and conflict profile in the specific communities under study – can be considered high, as it has triangulated various quantitative and qualitative data sources, and has validated findings with partners.

As the study was conducted in only three communities in each of the two counties, and as respondents to interviews and survey questionnaires were not selected randomly, the external validity of the study is limited: its findings are not necessarily applicable to other counties in Liberia. However, the statistical data collected from on-site interviewees who volunteered information, as well as the secondary data collected, were considered relevant to the scope and definitions of the TOR of the study. The study's methodology proved adequate to meeting the overall objective of providing useful analytical input to the PBF project, as well as informing other actors working in similar areas of peacebuilding in the two Liberian counties.



▶ Group work during the validation meeting of the present study; 26 February 2020; Monrovia, Liberia; County, Liberia

2. Establishing the general socio-economic and conflict profile of Bong and Lofa counties

► 2.1. General socio-economic characteristics of Bong and Lofa counties

The selection of these communities for this study corresponds to the geographical focus of the PBF project. To quote the FAO/ILO/WFP project document (p. 8):

“According to the 2016 Household Income and Expenditure Survey, Bong County has an estimated population of 407,041. Located in the central region of the country, it is the third most populous county. Considered as one of the food baskets in the country, the bordering county of Lofa lies in the north central part of the country with an estimated population of 337,934. The neighboring counties of Bong and Lofa have been selected due to their high level of conflict risk - linked to the concentration of land disputes in this region and the intensity of the challenge of poverty, food insecurity and lack of educational attainment.”

Indeed, 71.3 per cent of Bong County's population live in absolute poverty and 55.9 per cent in food poverty, and the figures for Lofa County are similar (68.7 per cent and 55 per cent respectively). In terms of educational attainment, Bong County had the highest, and Lofa County the third highest, percentage of population having received no education at all (respectively, 68 per cent for women/50 per cent for men and 65 per cent for women/41 per cent for men).³ Moreover, it is in these two counties that young people have been most likely to join armed groups and become alienated from their families and social milieu. Even today, they still lack income and employment opportunities offering them a viable future that could help curb violent tendencies (GIZ 2012).

- Young women in Bong and Lofa depend largely on small-scale and subsistence farming and petty trading for their livelihoods, with (legal and illegal) mining and agricultural commuting and commercial bike-riding added to this list for male youth. Given Liberian society's great dependence on the productive participation of youth in the economy, social and economic circumstances in the researched communities in Bong and Lofa

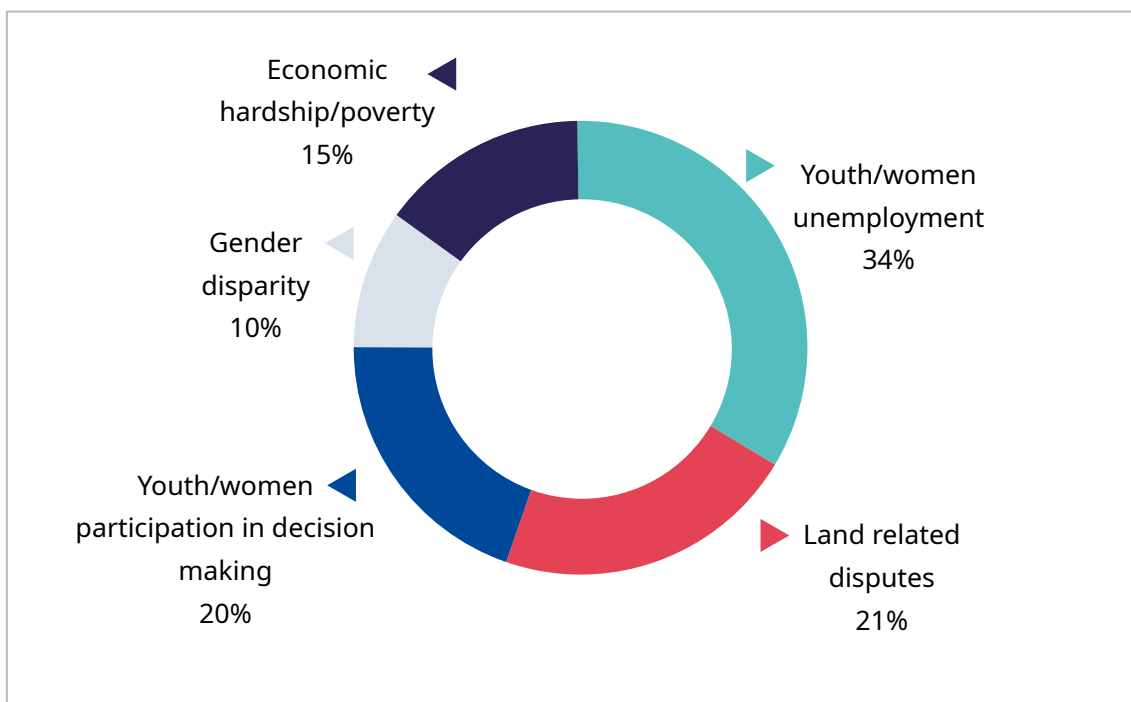
³ Liberia Demographic and Health Survey 2013

often dictate that young people become breadwinners at an early age (male youth) or engage in domestic work (female youth). Furthermore, schools and health centres in the two communities are mostly run by private entities. Most young people and their families are unable to access basic social services, including routine healthcare and clinical services, due to the high costs of the limited services that do exist and the non-availability of essential drugs.

- ▶ The acquisition and cultivation of land is definitely key to economic and social security in the fertile lands of Bong and Lofa counties, with livelihoods depending on subsistence farming, small-scale farming, livestock husbandry and petty trading. Traditional and local authorities (commissioners, city mayors, chiefs and family heads) are often involved in the selling and distribution of land and other community resources to generate income to support personal and community endeavours.

As regards survey participants' "main concerns" in respect of youth and women's development, the findings confirm that the counties face a dual challenge of economic despair (unemployment at 33.7 per cent and economic hardship/poverty at 15 per cent) and non-inclusive decision-making structures (20 per cent), particularly with regard to land disputes (21 per cent) (see Figure 3). These findings are consistent with earlier findings by Herbert (2014: 9), who writes that Liberians are "angry and frustrated at the lack of and unequal access to opportunities, particularly employment; basic services (education, health, water); political power and processes; and land".

▶ **Figure 3: Main concerns regarding youth and women's development**



Source: survey questionnaire responses, n=92

► 2.2. Overall conflict profile of the two counties and six communities

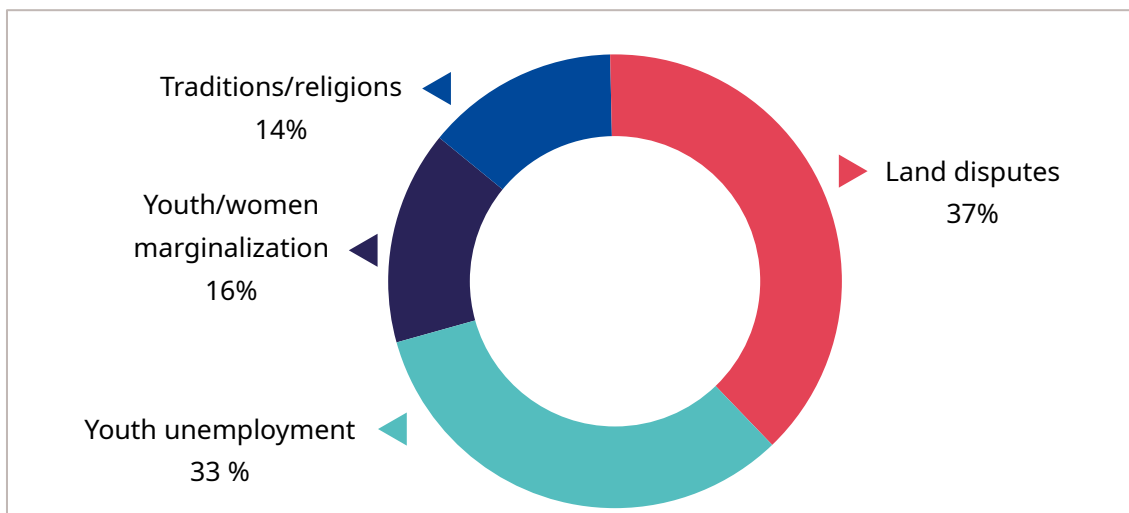
The 2017 “Mapping of opportunities for the consolidation of peace in Liberia”, carried out by the Liberia Peacebuilding Office, identified land and property disputes, as well as youth agitation (mainly about unemployment), as key aspects of conflict and fragility in Liberia. Following massive conflict-induced displacements, disputes over land are particularly concentrated in the two neighboring counties in the north-west of Liberia, which were particularly hard hit by the civil war. Bong County, for instance, borders Lofa, Margibi and Nimba counties (central Liberia). Its economically advantageous geographical location for trade and resource extraction appears to have given rise a scramble to acquire land, leading to inflated land prices. This is why Lofa and Bong counties were among the four pilot counties for the Ministry of Justice’s efforts to introduce alternative resolution mechanisms for resolving land disputes. According to the 2017 mapping, the risks of resurging conflict were particularly high in both counties, and land disputes and youth agitation remained contentious factors.

The fragile nature of peace and the threats to human security have a significant gender dimension: the legal frameworks addressing violence against women are inadequate (for example, while rape is the most widely reported crime, convictions in such cases have remained minimal). Gender inequality is rife, with Liberia ranked 150th out of 159 countries on the Gender Inequality Index (UNDP HDR 2016). Even though women make up 54 per cent of the labour force in the formal and informal sectors, they continue to be challenged by gender inequalities that marginalize and exclude them from equal employment across the productive sectors. As regards access to and inheritance of land, and other factors of production such as capital and skills, young women face particular barriers, rooted in discrimination based on age and gender. Despite the challenges Liberian women face, they continue to make headway in challenging a system that initially excluded them: women are now represented in parliament and the cabinet, though not yet proportionately to men. Liberian women have been crucial to achieving peace in Liberia, acting as informal peacemakers and peacekeepers during the civil war, even though they are often marginalized.⁴

This study confirms and refines the findings of the 2017 national study, providing descriptive statistics and the more detailed qualitative analysis set forth below.

4 The above section has been adapted from the FAO/ILO/WFP project document, p. 6

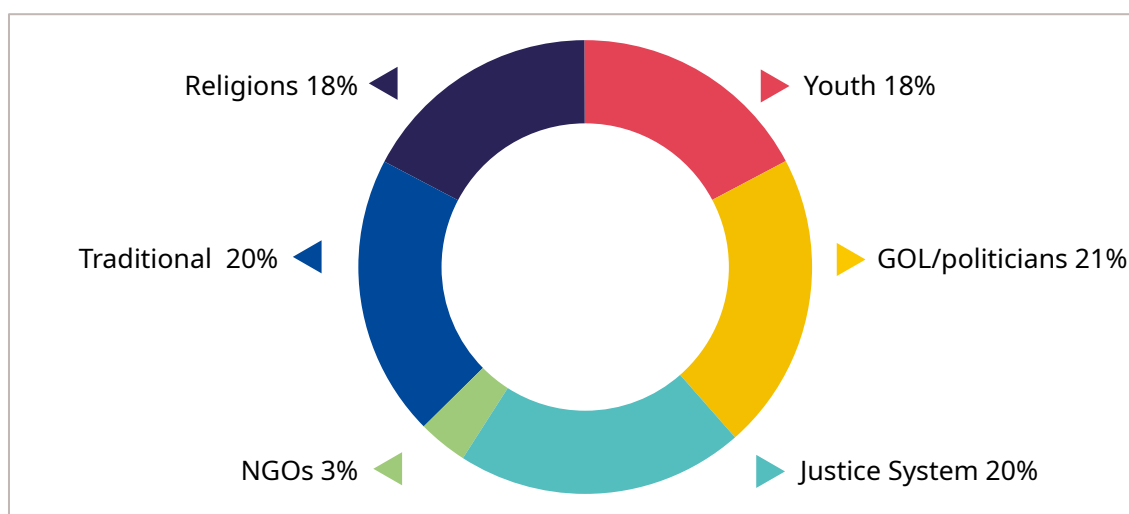
► **Figure 4: Main perceived causes of conflict in the target communities in Bong and Lofa**



Source: Survey questionnaire responses, n=92

As Figure 4 shows, respondents participating in focus group discussions in Bong and Lofa counties named land disputes as the main cause of conflict in their communities (37 per cent), followed by youth unemployment (33 per cent), youth/women’s marginalization (16 per cent), and traditions/religious practices (14 per cent). A second, similar survey item, asking the reasons for a “lack of unity, peace and security” in the studied communities, yielded similar results, supporting the robustness of the quantitative descriptive findings.

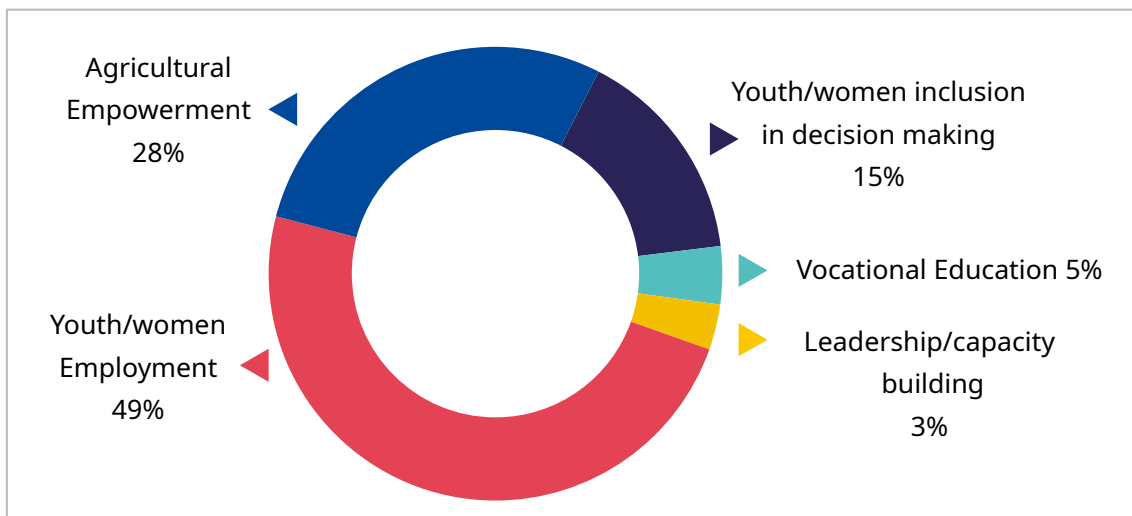
► **Figure 5: Key indicators (reasons) for lack of unity, peace and security in the target communities in Lofa and Bong**



Source: Survey questionnaire responses, n=92

Finally, a more resolution-oriented question asked study participants to make recommendations on how to achieve greater unity, peace and security in their communities (Figure 6). The findings confirm the importance of focusing on youth employment (49 per cent), as well as on the closely related issue of agricultural empowerment (28 per cent) and giving youth and women a greater stake in local decision-making structures (15 per cent).

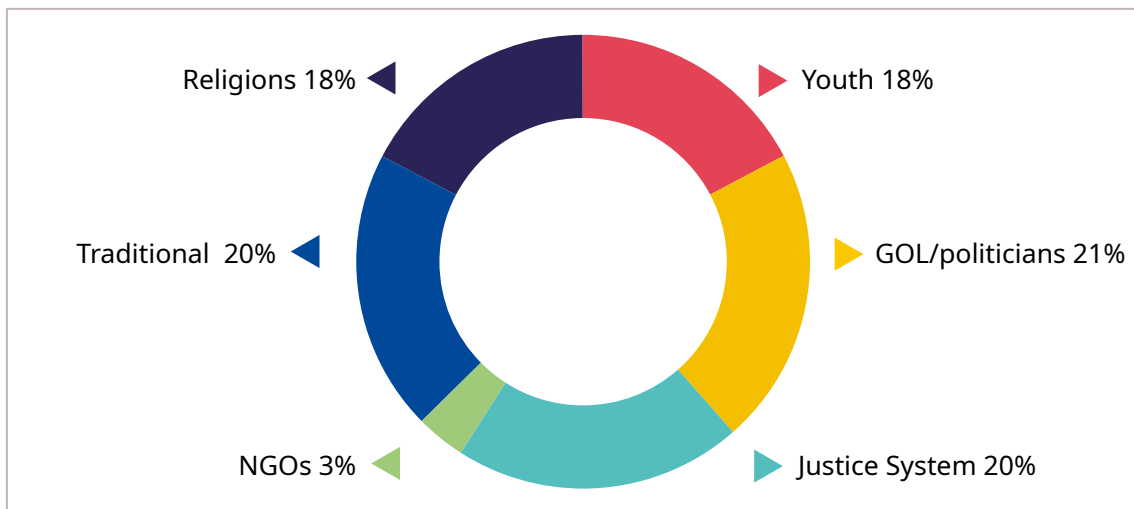
► **Figure 6: Recommendations considered to improve unity, peace, and development among youths in their communities**



Source: Survey questionnaire responses, n=92

This clearly indicates the generally significant *scope* of the age and gender dimensions of land disputes, the precise quality of which will be further explained in Section 3.

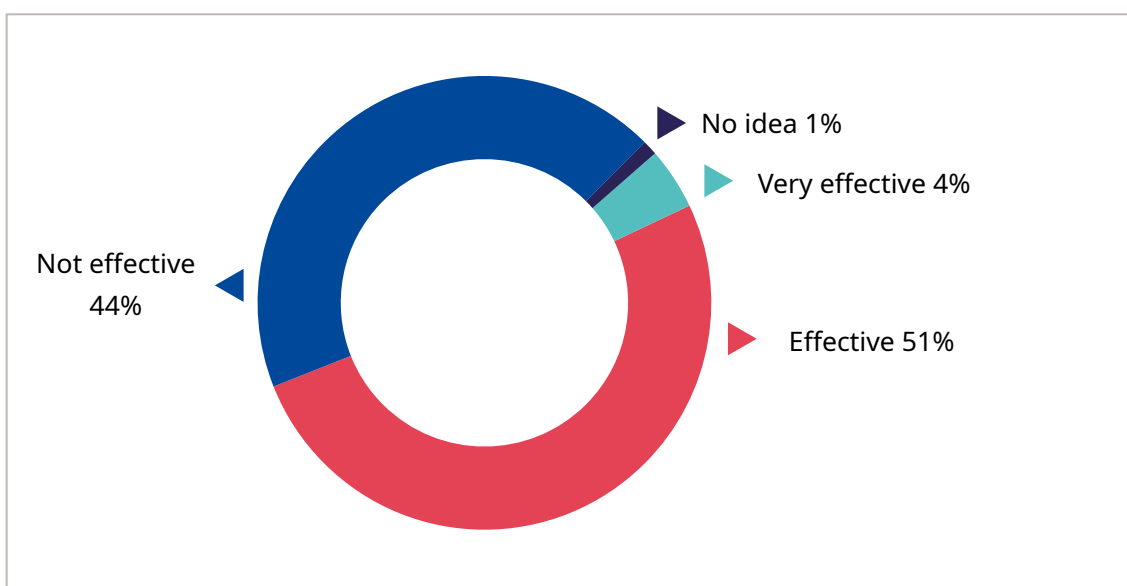
► **Figure 7: Actors identified as spoilers in FGDs**



Source: Survey questionnaire responses, n=92

Mulbah and Dennis (2017: 9) have identified tribes (51.8 per cent), villages (32.1 per cent), and political groups (23.4 per cent) as the key actors in conflicts. Going beyond this previous research, our present study further disentangles the “spoiler” category and finds that governance actors – the “Government of Liberia/politicians” (21 per cent), the justice system (20 per cent) and “traditionals” (20 per cent) – top the list, while youth themselves are mentioned as spoilers by only a fifth of focus-group participants. Asked whether they considered these spoilers “intentional” or “inadvertent”, a large majority of 75 per cent assumed conflict-inducing behaviour to be intentional.

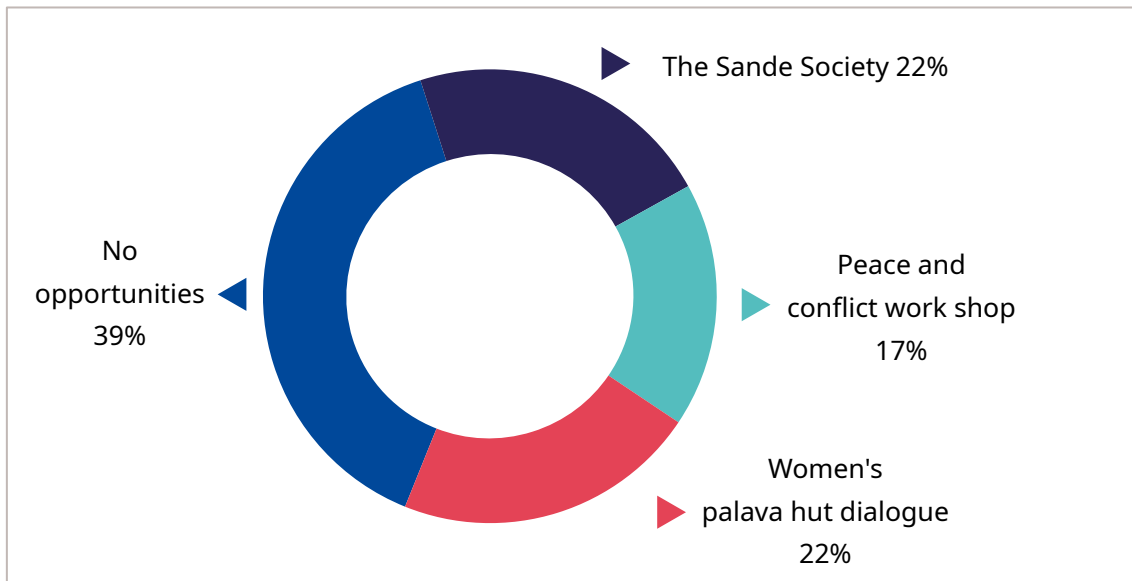
► **Figure 8: Perceived effectiveness of conflict resolution mechanisms in the community**



Source: Survey questionnaire responses, n=92

Regarding conflict resolution structures and young women and men’s access to them, survey participants were asked to point out existing opportunities. The answers showed the existence of “multi-purpose” conflict resolution structures, such as palava huts, that are seen by a small majority of survey respondents as effective or even very effective. These are structures the project might be able to work with (Figures 8 and 9). Furthermore, respondents observed that there are opportunities for women to be involved in conflict resolution (Figure 9), and their participation could be strengthened as part of the project.

► **Figure 9: Opportunities for women's participation in conflict resolution**



Source: Survey questionnaire responses, n=92





▶ Field workshop introducing the present study
27 February 2020; Gbarnga, Bong County, Liberia

3. Zooming in: analysis of the age and gender dimensions of land disputes

Years after the end of the Liberian civil war, recurrent community-level conflicts (sometimes violent) in the two counties have largely metamorphosed into disputes over land boundaries and fairer access to land, land use and leasing. These conflicts run not only along ethnic lines, as often emphasized, but also have inter-generational and gender dimensions. This study confirms this finding and supports the basic underpinnings of the FAO/ILO/WFP project, which aims to build peace by tackling the intersection of land disputes and the exclusion of young women and men. Given the multiplex phenomena of fragility in Liberia, the project will gain by *focusing* precisely on the *age and gender dimensions* of land disputes, while being *sensitive* to the ethnic and religious dimensions, which, however, are not at the heart of its design and theory of change.

The following section summarizes these specific conflict dynamics (“the problem”) and investigates its socio-economic drivers. It is argued that two main factors explain the recurrence of land disputes having age and gender dimensions, and the related agitation and violence: a lack of socio-economic opportunities for young women and men, and grievances over weak and exclusive state and non-state governance and land-dispute resolution.

► 3.1. The problem in a nutshell

3.1.1. *Dividing lines of land disputes: Ethnicity, age and gender*

As stated the above, longstanding conflicts, sometimes violent, have largely metamorphosed into disputes over land and, more precisely, over land boundaries, and land use (leasing) and distribution. Land – the basis for economic security and social esteem – remains the indispensable foundation for the livelihoods of most inhabitants of Bong and Lofa counties, and disputes over its distribution are ongoing. The original ownership of land and subsequent transfers of ownership have been a subject of contestation and conflict in the two counties ever since the establishment of the Liberian state, with negative impacts on social cohesion, peacebuilding and sustainable development (Land Rights Act, 2018:6; Herbert, 2014; TRC Final Report, 2008).

Ethnicity: Conflicts over land play out, on the one hand, along ethnic lines. The Mandingo and Lorma tribes in Lofa county, for example, as well as Islamic, Christian and traditional communities, are noted for engaging in land and property disputes. In Zorzor City, for

instance, the ownership of the 21 acres of surrounding land is continuously contested. According to the city's mayor, Mrs. Garmai Gbelee, historical documents indicate that the land of Zorzor Township belongs to the Lorma tribe, but this has persistently been contested by the Mandingo tribe. In the past, ethnic and religious tensions have been behind these sometimes violent disputes, in particular throughout the Liberian civil war. Inter-marriage among members of different tribes in these communities have exacerbated the difficulties involved in peacefully establishing and arbitrating land rights, land use and land sales in the region. Unfortunately, there is an absence of effective and transparent property dispute mechanisms, in Lofa and Bong counties in particular (UNICEF, 2015; TRC, Final Report, 2008).

Alongside these ethnic divisions, however, conflicts over access to and the sale and the use of land are structured significantly – and increasingly it seems – along the lines of age and gender.

- ▶ *Gender:* Women's ownership and use of land was discussed in focus groups in Zorzor, Lofa County. The subject was controversial: women's right to own land (as enshrined in the new Land Right Act of 2018: 6) was generally opposed on the basis that it would give land rights to "foreigners" who had married into local families. Moreover, women participants of these focus groups complained of limited access to loan schemes and training opportunities that would help them to jump-start small-scale business enterprises.
- ▶ *Age:* The study observed that land sales, and land distribution and use, underpinned tensions and conflict between traditional authorities and chiefs, on the one hand, and young women and men, on the other. The local and traditional authorities, consisting of family or tribal heads, chiefs, mayors and commissioners, have always been considered the principal custodians of land in Bong and Lofa counties. As such, they handle all land-related matters, including sales, distribution and allocation for personal and communal use. Young people and women are most likely to suffer from unemployment and poverty, resulting from their lack of access to land. Throughout the focus group discussions and surveys, youth and women's complaints therefore centred on these traditional procedures and approaches, and their ongoing exclusion from and lack of participation in land-related matters. Consequently, young men and women feel disadvantaged and occasionally agitate for justice and participation.

3.1.2. Manifestations of land-related youth violence and conflict

Firstly, respondents confirmed that this *lack of access to land* had often led to violent exchanges between young people and local authorities. They also cited land- and more general livelihood-related mob violence led by youth. Secondly, unemployed young men, in particular, appear to be perpetrators of violence in cases where *members of their families* are affected by land disputes and do not have access to adequate dispute resolution mechanisms. These two factors, therefore – a lack of access to land for young women and men, or for their families, and a lack of legitimate, inclusive and effective dispute resolution mechanisms – directly trigger violence.

While youth and gender are obvious factors in these conflicts, *further implications of land disputes and young men and women's exclusion* from access to land and opportunities for sustainable agricultural livelihoods need to be taken into account. To pose a counterfactual question: would conflict and violence be less likely if young women and men's access to land, land dispute resolution and other livelihood options improved? It is possible – and this is a third point to take into account – that, without adequate education and opportunities to put their skills to good use, young people may get involved in illicit activities. Accordingly, youth exclusion from land and other productive resources has been found to be among the main underlying causes of high crime rates in the areas under study. Furthermore, in Liberia's recent history there have been several instances of youth mobilization for violent causes of different sorts, with young people's vulnerability exacerbated by the lack of valid opportunities (LISGIS, 2011; Mulbah & Dennis, 2017; MIA, 2018; UNDP, 2006; Paczynska, 2010).

Fourthly, where young women are concerned, it can be argued that their debarment from land ownership and dispute resolution means that they are not only excluded economically, but, given their economic dependency, are also more vulnerable to the common phenomenon of gender-based and sexual violence.

The problem: manifestations of land-related youth conflict and violence

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 | Youth agitation over lack of access to land and land dispute resolution |
| 2 | Youth agitation over land disputes in solidarity with family members |
| 3 | Compensatory criminal behaviour, and vulnerability to violent youth mobilization, as a proximate result of lack of access to land |
| 4 | Young male perpetration of, and young female subjugation to, sexual and gender-related violence |

To understand the reasons for land-related conflict and violence on the part of young people, we need to examine the root causes of fragility and conflict in Liberia, and identify the socio-economic drivers of conflict at the micro-level, which inform their at times alienated and destructive role in their communities.

▶ 3.2. Root causes of the youth and gender dimensions of land disputes and related youth violence

Conflict can be defined as an expressed struggle between two or more interdependent parties: an escalated competition at any system level between groups whose aim is to gain advantage in the area of power, resources, interests, and needs, where at least one of the groups believes that respective group goals are mutually incompatible (GPPAC, 2017: 15). Conflicts are not necessarily illegitimate, but always problematic when they turn violent. Conflicts can have as their basis legitimate demands for changes towards (social) justice and peace.

The main challenge for this study is to identify the conflict drivers that are *relevant* in explaining – and intervening on – the problem we are concerned with: the fact that youth revert to violence in protesting for access to land, or need to resort to illicit activities to be able to survive in the absence of a fair share of land and the livelihood opportunities that come with it. Some drivers of fragility in Liberia can be understood to “hover in the background” where this problem is concerned. Exactly how they affect the ultimate problem is unclear, as is the ability of the FAO/ILO/WFP project to affect such factors. Therefore, they will be mentioned only briefly.

In-flows of migrants in search of economic opportunities from the neighboring countries of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast have persisted over the decades. The interviews and focus groups indicated that this poses a challenge for youth and women’s livelihoods in the project communities, as immigration further inflates the proportion of young people in the total population. Similarly, McLaughlin (2012) observed that another cause of resentment in Liberia is foreign nationals that have secured jobs in the mining sector, instead of Liberians. In Salayea and Ganglota, meanwhile, illicit mining activities have attracted many foreign nationals from Guinea, Sierra Leone and Ivory Coast, who appear to have gained access to local communities through porous border points adjoining Bong and Lofa. Respondents linked these developments to young people’s involvement into drug trafficking, armed robbery and other criminal behavior now common in the areas under study. While these phenomena are without doubt relevant to the area within which the project is located, their root causes are far beyond the project’s sphere of influence. However, providing alternatives to illicit activities certainly is within the scope of the project, as will be further outlined below.

The location of the two counties has facilitated cross-border trading and social ties. However, unresolved *border disputes* between Guinean and Liberian communities along the Yeala-Muluyea River undercut the prospects for sustainable socio-economic development, unity, and peaceful co-existence in the Manu river basin. Realistically, however, these problems are also outside the sphere of influence of this PBF project.

Demographic pressures, in particular youth bulges, can put strains on labour markets, social protection systems and both societal and state institutions (Jütersonke and Kobayashi 2015: 16). In the counties of Lofa and Bong, 63 per cent of the population is below 35 years of age. Liberia's demography, not unusual in the region, presents one of the biggest challenges and socio-economic risks for the country's progress from fragility to development. This inter-agency project can contribute to managing the implications of these demographic pressures, but it cannot touch upon the roots of the challenge. However, if met by bold policy, this "problem" need not be a problem at all.

Identity-based conflicts based on ethnicity, religion or tribal affiliation are a further cause of the overall fragile, conflictual situation that pertains throughout Liberia, and in the two counties in particular. For instance, Lofa County is predominantly occupied by six ethnic groups from Liberia's sixteen tribes. More specifically, the two districts of Zorzor and Salayea are occupied by three distinct tribes: the Lorma, Mandingo and Kpelleh. Cultural and religious differences are widespread, particularly between the Mandingo and the Lorma.

The analytical thrust and design of this project, and similar interventions in the sector of socio-economic approaches to peacebuilding, takes into account *two main conflict drivers*: (a) the socio-economic marginalization and related lack of economic opportunities for young women and men, and (b) grievances over the ineffectiveness and lack of inclusiveness of state and non-state governance and land dispute resolution.

► 3.3. Analysis of the conflict drivers

3.3.1. Lack of economic opportunities for young women and men

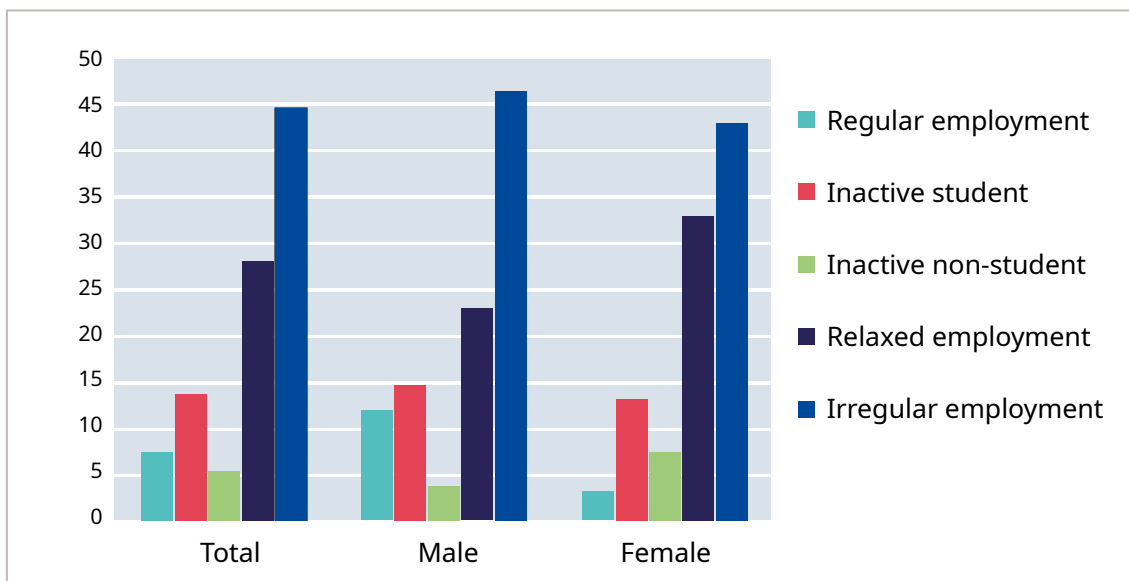
The data collected for this study, as well as the review of secondary literature, points to significant socio-economic inequalities and the economic – as well as the political (or governance) – marginalization of young women and men in the target communities. Their access to education and sustainable income opportunities in the licit (not to mention formal) economy is very limited.

Poverty and un- or underemployment: Youth and women's socio-economic marginalization in the two counties is linked to broader patterns of exclusion of young women and men in Liberia. Poverty is pervasive across the country (70 per cent), while the stunted growth of children under the age of five, an indicator of chronic malnutrition, is at exceptionally high levels (32 per cent). Forty per cent of school-age children do not receive any formal education. Youth unemployment and underemployment are of particular concern. According to a 2014 ILO study, youth constitute more than a third of the total population and nearly half of

the total labour force in Liberia.⁵ However, the labour-force participation rate for the 15-24 cohort was 35.1 per cent, substantially lower than the national average of 63.5 per cent (ILO 2014).

Figure 10, taken from the ILO (2013) “School to Work Transition Survey” for Liberia shows that a mere 7.5 per cent of Liberian youth are in regular employment, while 13.9 per cent are inactive students, hopefully increasing their human capital for better employment prospects in the future. The remaining categories are less positive: 45 per cent of young people are engaged in low-productive, irregular employment, 28.3 per cent are unemployed (relaxed definition) and 5.4 per cent are neither in the labour force nor in education or training. This suggests that instead of an unutilized labour potential of 12.6 per cent (based on a strict definition of unemployment), policymakers should be worrying about as many as 78.7 per cent of young people, who can be considered as falling within the category of underutilized labour.

► **Figure 10: Distribution of the youth population (15-29) by more detailed disaggregation of economic activity and by sex (%)**



Source: ILO 2013, Y-axis = percentage

Education: Obstacles to young people joining the labour force include a lack of formal education, as well as vocational training; a mismatch between skills training and available opportunities; and the fact that young people may be viewed as security concerns. Due to the socio-economic constraints that prevail in the rural communities of Bong and Lofa, most youths are forced to drop out of school early.⁶ Overall, the current study confirmed previous

⁵ In this case, please note the difference between the ILO definition of youth (15-24) and the UNSC Resolution 2250 definition (18-29).

⁶ According to a 2011 Analytical Report from the 2008 Population and Housing Census, some 41 per cent of youth and adolescents in Liberia were in elementary schools, 14.9 per cent in high schools and 0.9 per cent in tertiary institutions, while about 36% had no education.

findings about the unavailability of high-school places in some communities/towns in Bong and Lofa. On this subject, a youth respondent in the focus group conducted in of Ganglota, Mama Tokpah, stated: “We want the government to upgrade the Ganglota Public School to high-school level...” (Mama Tokpah, Ganglota, Salayea).

Lack of non-agricultural opportunities: As land remains the major source of livelihood and revenue generation in all the communities studied in Bong and Lofa counties, and youth and women hardly participate in decision-making regarding land sales, land distribution, land ownership and farming activities, they are unable to earn an income from agriculture. Where opportunities do exist, for instance in the logging sector, young people are excluded from reaping any benefits, as contracts are negotiated and implemented without their being consulted. As adulthood is primarily defined by socio-economic participation, many young people find themselves blocked in their attempted passage from child status to adulthood. In recent times, the prospects for making this transition appear to be even more restricted.

Particular challenges for women and girls: Liberia’s new Land Rights Act (2018) ensures equal access and equal protection with respect to land ownership. However, the use and management of land, as well as access to and control of landed resources, which should not depend on custom, ethnicity, tribe, language or gender, still remains a challenge in Bong and Lofa counties. Land sales and land ownership are a huge point of contention for young women because they are categorically excluded from participating in buying and selling land, and making decisions in land-related matters. Women often remain excluded from effective participation in land administration services and policies. This echoes the more generalizable findings of Herbert (2014), who noted that women in Liberia, across the board, are less able than men to access education, obtain capital to start businesses or acquire land and property. Culture and tradition continue to support male dominance and male inheritance of family/ancestral lands in Lofa and Bong counties, and Liberia in general. In both counties, as in most parts of Liberia, a male dominated culture is perpetuated.

Link to violence and illicit activities: The dismal employment situation, coupled with the recurrent poverty and economic hardship in the communities we studied, leaves youth with limited options for earning a sustainable living. Their struggles for improved economic opportunities often translate into agitation for land use and ownership. Youth participants in the study stated that livelihood conditions are unbearable and, as a result, many of them are engaged in small-scale farming or commuting by bicycle to nearby villages and towns to engage in petty trading, nearly all of which takes place in the informal economy. It is also possible that illegal mining activities in Bong and Lofa communities have contributed to youth-related violence, as young people strive for economic empowerment and social esteem. Limited access to licit economic opportunities drives youth to engage in violent and/or illegal behaviour. Indeed, during the post-conflict period, recent experimental research on Liberia has found a correlation between youth unemployment and young people’s engagement in illicit activities, including illegal resource extraction and participation in regional armed conflicts. The study highlights the lack of economic opportunities for youth as a considerable threat to the maintenance of peace in Liberia (Blattman and Annan 2015).

3.3.2. Grievances over weak and exclusive state and non-state governance and land dispute resolution

Weak land dispute resolution: Where the root causes of lack of clarity in respect of property rights and inadequate resolution mechanisms are concerned, many land disputes are the consequence of wartime displacement and resettlement patterns, coupled with persistent ambiguities between customary and formal property rights. As the Liberian Ministry of Justice (n.d.) has acknowledged, government-sponsored dispute resolution through the courts is not as effective as it should be in providing speedy, efficient, cost-effective and broadly acceptable means of resolving conflicts. The study found significant deficiencies as regards the overall effectiveness and inclusiveness of state and non-state land governance in the two counties, resulting in unequal access to socio-economic services and livelihoods, disadvantaging youth and women in particular, and hindering the implementation of progressive, potentially transformative legislation. In 2018, the Liberian Government passed a law governing the acquisition, entitlement and access to land, as well as the exercise of related political rights (Land Rights Act, 2018). Furthermore, as a result of the difficulties involved in formal court-based dispute resolution in Liberia, the Government, in partnership with international organizations, has sought to introduce new, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, also covering matters of land tenure. However, although the Land Rights Act has been published and is currently being rolled out, there have been serious technical and political obstacles to its implementation.

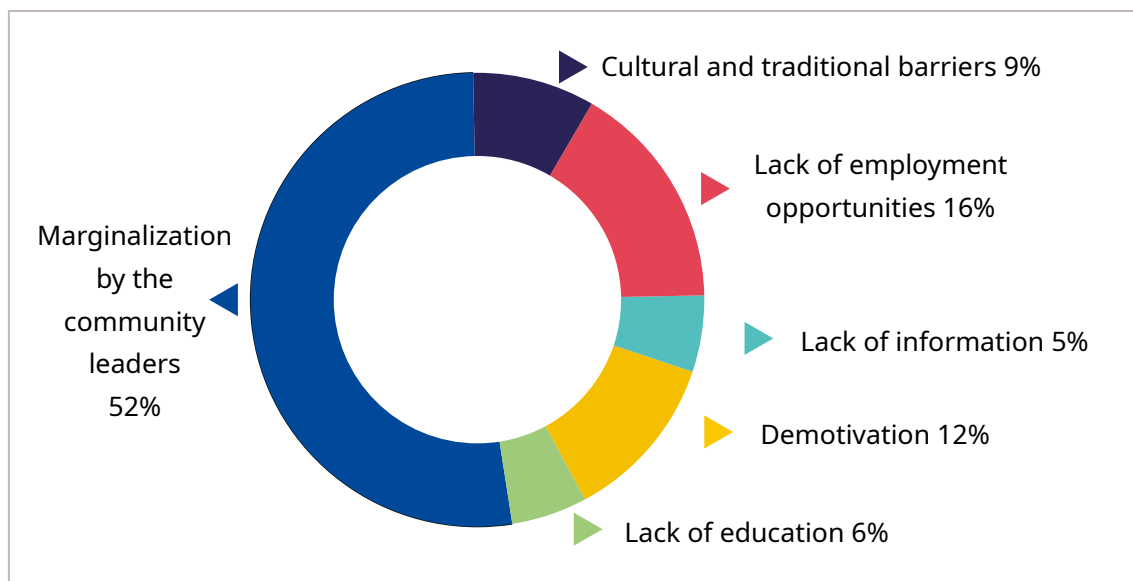
Capacity constraints: Concerning the more *technical* side of policy reform, capacity development remains a major concern for all stakeholders in the areas under review. Some faith-based training institutions and public facilities are in dilapidated condition and/or are poorly maintained by local authorities. There seems to be widespread mismanagement of public funds, and sales of land to multiple buyers. Participants in the stakeholder consultations and in-depth interviews attributed the situation to several factors, including corruption, neglect, lack of political will and low budgetary allotment from the national Government. A recent study by Mulbah and Dennis (2017) points to corruption as a major conflict driver in Bong County. According to this study, corruption is the second-ranking perceived cause of conflict in Liberia. The local authorities who participated in the FGDs blamed the lack of development on the central Government and on politicians.

Vested political interests: Concerning the *political economy* of policy reform, delayed implementation of the Land Rights Act reflects prevailing tensions over land and vested interests related to customary land-right practices in the hinterlands of Bong and Lofa counties. These vested interests perpetuate a system in which youth and women are marginalized by the prevailing traditional and local structures (the customs and cultural

practices of the predominant Kpelleh, Mandingo and Lorma tribes) and prevented from participating in decision-making in their communities (see Figure 11).

► *Exclusion of youth:* The marginalization of youth and women prevents them from fully engaging in existing dispute resolution processes (such as palava huts, conflict management mechanisms, peace talks and court proceedings). Young men and women, in particular, remain excluded from local decision-making mechanisms and, throughout the interviews and focus groups organized as part of this study, voiced grievances over the fact that they are excluded a) from land access in the first place and b) from dispute resolution mechanisms whereby such access could be established. Traditional authorities, politicians and local government administrators have quarreled and fought to establish supremacy in matters of land rights and land distribution (see Figure 11). Meanwhile, youth and women have borne the brunt of marginalization, discrimination and outright exclusion from participation in land-related issues in Bong and Lofa counties. Consequently, in interviews and focus groups, they expressed feelings of having been let down and marginalized in their communities.

► **Figure 11: Reasons for youth disengagement in decision-making processes**



Source: Survey questionnaire responses, n=96.

Link to violence and agitation: In the interviews and focus groups, youth and women's demands for equal rights and justice stemmed from their being marginalized and disadvantaged in decision-making, particularly in respect of land ownership. It is clear that conflict ensues when young men and women are excluded from the decision-making process during land sales, or when agreements relating to land use and/or distribution are being formulated. In other words, the persistent conflicts over land issues in the target communities in Bong and Lofa counties are due to the marginalization and exclusion of both youth and women

from participation in decision-making. Overall, this study validates earlier reports, which found that “youth in Liberia in general felt excluded from access to political, economic or societal power” (Paczynska, 2010) – and this directly translates into grievances over unequal treatment along the lines of age and gender.

3.3.3. Interactions between the two conflict drivers

It is not hard to see how the two drivers of conflict – lack of economic opportunities and grievances over unfair treatment – interact in the studied communities. Against the backdrop of an overall lack of economic opportunities, access to land and land dispute resolution mechanisms becomes ever more crucial for youth and women’s livelihoods. Consider the counterfactual: if there were economic opportunities in licit, non-agricultural sectors, youth would have sufficient options apart from access to and use of land. This, it seems, is not the case in the two counties. Therefore, as community members, young people, who might already be trapped in illicit activities and possibly motivated to leave them, have a right to demand a fair share of their communities’ main source of income: fertile land. Grievances can only grow when young people are denied such access or perceive the decision-making processes governing land distribution and/or dispute resolution to be unfair and exclusive.

Let us examine one example of how grievances over unfair treatment of youth and a lack of economic opportunities are tightly interlinked in the two counties. According to respondents in Zorzor District, the Sain Africa Logging Company operating in Bluyeama (in Zorzor District of Lofa county) has in the past three years been harvesting timber in the area without its activities having any direct positive impact on the livelihoods of youths in the community. FGD participants in Zorzor City, identified the national government, politicians, and traditional and local authorities as spoilers in excluding young women and men, who therefore feel sidelined in the development of natural resources.

4. Towards action: summary of findings and recommendations

This study has confirmed the overall assumptions and earlier findings upon which the FAO/ILO/WFP project is based: the exclusion of youth and women from decision-making procedures over land allocation has led to grievances over inequality and lack of economic opportunities, resulting in land disputes, youth frustration and agitation. The prevailing socio-economic situation in the hinterlands of Bong and Lofa, and the lack of access to employment, has serious implications for peace and development. Essentially, continued unemployment locks youth in limbo and idleness, despite the rhetorical flourishes in official discourse that refer to young people as the “leaders of tomorrow”. These findings are in line with – and further develop – previous arguments regarding land disputes and youth agitation for participation in socio-economic development (Mulbah & Dennis, 2017:5; TRC Report, 2008).

An intervention such as the present FAO/ILO/WFP project seeks to tackle the main drivers of conflict in the two counties (lack of opportunities and grievances). To make this a tangible reality for vulnerable young men and women, the project team and all involved stakeholders may draw useful conclusions from this study's findings:

1. Focus the community-based participatory planning process on promoting a shared understanding of the problem and finding viable entry points for solutions (Outputs 1.1. and 1.2.a)

The important role played by youth and women in the peace process is recognized by the Liberian public, 78.8 per cent and 74.4 per cent of whom view youth and women, respectively, as important and effective peacebuilding actors (Liberia Peacebuilding Office, 2017). The project therefore focuses on relevant areas of peacebuilding, namely land disputes and economic opportunities, and a target group with great potential for sustaining an inclusive peace: young women and men.

However, relations among stakeholders in the target communities are characterized by diverging perceptions of the root causes of current problems, including conflict and violence. For instance, the Salala and Totota communities expressed discontent over governance issues and corruption in land matters, but while key stakeholders accused “corrupt” politicians and local authorities, those in leadership positions saw young people's quest for “quick-fix solutions” and low level of participation in local governance as the root cause of conflict in their communities. Government representatives questioned in the focus group discussions saw young people as anxious and impatient, demanding quick solutions to address their concerns.

This divergence of perceptions and opinions underlines the importance of managing expectations and relationships as the project progresses. The key stakeholders do not yet have a common perception of the problem and its causes, and seem to be attributing blame to each other, or, as in the case of local authorities, to a higher level of authority. As a result, and as already foreseen in the project document, participatory planning workshops are needed to:

- ▶ **Develop a shared understanding of the problem and promote ownership of the analysis set forth in this study:** in other words, validate the analysis of this report and develop a shared understanding of the age and gender dimensions of land disputes, and the related youth violence
- ▶ **Promote ownership of proposed solutions:** identify the governance institutions most pertinent for land-related peacebuilding in the specific communities – institutions that the project could aim to strengthen and in which the voice and participation of youth could be enhanced. With this end in view, focus on two types of institutions:
 - **“Single-purpose” land dispute resolution mechanisms**, such as judicial proceedings and institutions attached to the Liberian land authority;
 - **“Multi-purpose” peacebuilding and conflict resolution mechanisms**, such as peace huts, palava huts, community radio stations and cultural programmes, for instance peace carnivals.

The project’s focus on greater inclusion of young women and men in decision-making, and the overall focus on youth, should be communicated clearly to all stakeholders present at the workshops.

While awaiting the results of participatory community workshops, this study already allows us to draw certain conclusions as to the kinds of activities that will be necessary to strengthen overall land dispute governance and the role of youth therein (under Outcome 1), and to promote tangible economic opportunities for youth, so as to reduce their socio-economic marginalization and grievances (under Outcome 2).

2. Strengthen the overall capacity and inclusiveness of “single-purpose” institutions, such as the statutory land authority, and relevant traditional authorities, to manage land distribution and sales, and to resolve disputes (Outputs 1.2.b and 1.2.d)

In 2018, the Liberian Government adopted a law governing the acquisition, entitlement and access to land, and the exercise of related political rights (Land Rights Act, 2018). Furthermore, as a result of the difficulties involved in formal court-based dispute resolution in Liberia, the Government, in partnership with international organizations, has sought to introduce alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, also covering the area of land tenure. However, although the Land Act has been published and is currently being implemented, there have been serious obstacles to its implementation. In particular, the marginalization of youth and women continues to prevent them from fully engaging in dispute resolution processes. Therefore, although progressive legislation exists, there are both *technical*

and *political* obstacles to its implementation (see p. 18). This study recommends tackling both obstacles, and using technical capacity-building incentives and assets to improve the political inclusiveness of the relevant institutions.

The study found that implementation is hindered partly by technical-capacity problems at the community and county levels. In cooperation with the relevant authorities, the project could focus on enhancing local land authorities' capacities to monitor, supervise, validate and verify communal land sales and re-allocations in Bong and Lofa. To ensure that these authorities adequately take into account the interests of youth, such capacity-building exercises should include modules on youth empowerment.

3. Ensure the inclusion of young women and men in “multi-purpose” institutions and strengthen the role of these institutions in land dispute resolution (Outputs 1.2.b, 1.2.c and 1.2.d)

Valuable efforts have been made by governmental agencies (MIA and Land Right Authority), the FAO and religious organizations in Monrovia to address land-related conflicts and other drivers of conflict in the communities under consideration through alternative, “multi-purpose” peacebuilding and dispute resolution mechanisms. In particular, “peace huts” and “palaver huts” – community structures used in (women-led) peacebuilding initiatives (UN Women 2019) – have been found to be effective, for instance in the cities of Totota and Zorzor in the two counties. The study's findings confirm that, overall, these structures are effective in solving a wide range of disputes. From the data collected, it remains unclear to what extent these structures are currently active in the area of land disputes, but their links to land dispute resolution mechanisms could be strengthened.

The high participation of women is a defining characteristic of these structures, and there is an opportunity for strengthening the representation of *young* women in particular in their work. At the same time, links between these community structures and county and district peacebuilding committees and inter-religious councils could be enhanced.

4. Strengthen young women and men's capacities to take part in these and other peacebuilding governance structures (relevant for all outputs under Outcome 1)

A significant proportion of the young people interviewed in Bong and Lofa showed a lack of interest and/or a lack of essential life skills in relation to conflict resolution and governance processes, which impeded their ability to participate positively in communal development. Therefore, as a parallel activity, and as a precondition for the effective inclusion of youth in land dispute and multi-purpose peacebuilding structures, programme participants would benefit from life and conflict-resolution skills training, to enable them to actively and constructively take part in the above-mentioned mechanisms.

5. Strengthen the evidence base for the contribution to peace and social cohesion made by programmes focusing on socio-economic development, dispute resolution and women's empowerment

It is assumed that participation in traditional societies is one of the avenues for young people to gain access to decision-making. While participation in such institutions may provide access, it could also exclude those who object to them or who belong to religious or ethnic minorities.

Beyond addressing grievances and promoting economic activities, further evidence is needed on how access to land and economic opportunities can contribute to community cohesion, in particular with regard to the inclusion of youth and women. Further analysis is also needed on how women's economic empowerment and participation in decision-making in matters relating to land contribute to social cohesion at the community level.

6. Strengthen beneficiaries' access to the agricultural skills and assets they need most (relevant for Outcome 2)

▶ *Skills and assets for agricultural business development*

The young women and men surveyed for this study pointed to a lack of training opportunities for jump-starting small-scale enterprises in their communities. Relevant sectors for youth entrepreneurship include small-scale farming (including rice and vegetable growing) and animal husbandry (including poultry) to substitute for the hunting of wildlife for food and livelihood support. The project activities outlined under Outcome 2, including skills training, cooperative development and rehabilitation of land, seem well-targeted to address the needs of young people when it comes to jump-starting their own businesses in this area.

Looking beyond currently planned project activities, the project team and other actors willing to contribute to peace and security through socio-economic approaches to peacebuilding might consider activities in the following areas:

▶ *Access to finance*

Women participants in the FGDs complained of limited access to loan schemes. The project partners, as well as any future initiatives in the two counties, could set up microfinance schemes targeting young women and men, who are usually unable to access finance.

▶ *Employment-intensive rehabilitation of market infrastructure*

Another problem mentioned by young men and women was a lack of market storage facilities. Having harvested agricultural products from community farmlands, they are faced with the challenge of storing and processing goods for onward marketing. The project might consider whether to support the construction of new – or the rehabilitation of existing – market storage facilities. To this end, employment-intensive approaches to infrastructure development could be adopted, providing short-term jobs for young women and men in the communities concerned.

7. Consider to what extent non-agricultural sources of income can be generated, within or beyond the FAO/ILO/WFP project (relevant for Outcome 2)

Local youth have voiced their grievances over not reaping the benefits of the industrial activities that take place in the region, such as logging. As a result, some of them engage in illegal mining, which exposes them to hazards in respect of fundamental principles and rights at work. The project team and other actors should discuss how best to promote young people's access to non-agricultural livelihoods. Such questions could be discussed with local stakeholders in the workshops organized under Outcome 1, and could be followed up by skills training that meets the demands of industrial employers in the two counties. This would reduce the currently high demand for involvement in the agricultural sector, with positive implications for the age and gender dimensions of land disputes and related youth violence.

8. Target young beneficiaries of different ethnicities and genders on an equal basis

The age and gender dimensions intersect with identity-based drivers of conflict in creating the phenomena which the project aims to tackle. Therefore, as already mentioned in the project document, it is important to select and include programme beneficiaries from different ethnic, religious and gender backgrounds on an equal basis. The project might try to collect data on a community's ethnic and religious composition so as to arrive at the correct quotas.

9. Ensure that the two project outcomes are interlinked not only in theory, but also in practice (relevant for the linkages between outcomes 1 and 2)

The project should understand that its two outcomes are inherently interlinked. For youth and women, access to land dispute resolution mechanisms is only relevant insofar as it happens in an overall context of improving their access to land. If the new legislation, i.e. the 2018 Land Rights Act, were implemented, their inclusion in land dispute resolution mechanisms would logically follow, as they would now be considered as legal candidates for owning, buying and cultivating land, and hence legitimate parties to conflicts resulting from their rights and claims to land. Including youth and women in conflict resolution mechanisms while failing to enhance their access to land itself would not meet their demands for tangible economic opportunities in the agricultural sector.

Logically, the project is based on the above-stated link between access to land, access to dispute resolution and access to economic opportunities. The project document recognizes that the former is a necessary pre-condition of the latter, in other words that improved agricultural livelihoods for young rural women and men are possible only if they have access to land and dispute resolution. The project should be commended for integrating its two outcomes in this way, and hence tackling the interlinked conflict drivers of grievance and lack of opportunity, but it is crucial for its success that the two outcomes are also integrated in practice. To create synergies between the different programme activities, peacebuilding activities, business and cooperative development services, and value chain development

activities in the three identified sectors need to be integrated by the agencies involved and provided to the same beneficiaries.

10. Use this study's findings as a baseline for a subsequent evaluation of the project's employment and peace-related outcomes

The project's results framework specifies three peace-related performance indicators:

- ▶ Outcome 1:
 - Indicator 1.a) percentage change in perception among youth, women and local leaders of their ability to prevent, reduce and cope with conflict and promote peace
 - Indicator 2.a) percentage change in the number of land-related conflicts and disputes in the project areas
- ▶ Outcome 2:
 - Indicator 2.a.i) percentage of participants who expect their future economic situation to be better than their present economic situation

For indicator 1.a of Outcome 1, several survey items can be used to establish a baseline (measuring proxies for grievances).

| Indicator | Baseline | Possible target | Source |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>Perceived effectiveness of conflict resolution mechanisms in the community</i> | "effective" 51%, "very effective" 4 % | Increase "effective" or "very effective" to 70% | Survey questionnaire, see Figure 8 and data set |
| <i>Opportunities for women's participation in conflict resolution</i> | "no opportunities" 39% | Decrease "no opportunities" to 20% | Survey questionnaire, see Figure 9 and data set |
| <i>Level of youth participation in community development, including land issues, peace and security</i> | "low" 60%, "medium" 30%, "high" 10% | Increase "high" to 30% | Survey questionnaire, see Figure 11 and data set |

As this study includes a list of survey respondents, the same people could be re-contacted for the evaluation of the project, and the quantitative results on these three question items could be compared.

It would seem that the other two indicators cannot be directly measured using the survey findings. If possible, the project team should contact the relevant authorities and, if they hold such records, ask them for annual statistics of land disputes in their community. The lack of Indicator 2.a.i under Outcome 2 need not pose a huge problem. Firstly, the project team usually collects more quantitative data (not based on perception) for economic

opportunities and improvements in such opportunities in any case. Secondly, in the exit survey, programme participants could just be asked:

- ▶ “Has the programme improved your economic situation?”
- ▶ “Has the programme positively changed your economic outlook for the future?”
- ▶ “Has the programme improved social cohesion in your community?”
- ▶ “Has the programme changed your perception of the role woman can play as ‘peace champions’”?
- ▶ “Has the programme changed your perception of the role of youth in conflict resolution mechanisms? And as ‘peace champions’”?

The target could be set at 40%.



▶ Validation meeting of the present study;
26 February 2020; Monrovia, Liberia

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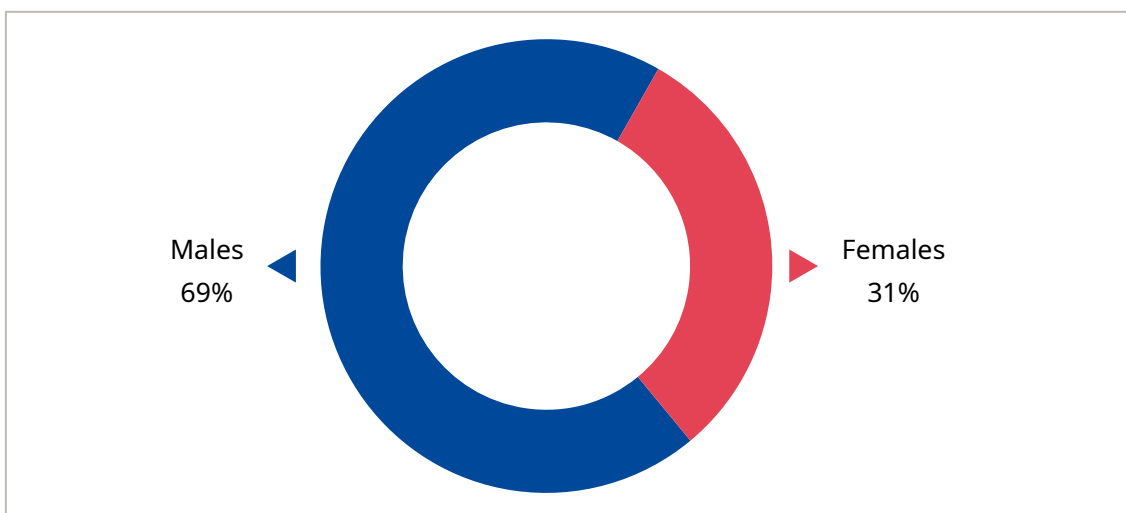
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Annex A: Location and composition of study respondents

► Figure 12: Composition of respondents by gender (Bong and Lofa)



► Figure 13: Composition of respondents by data collection method

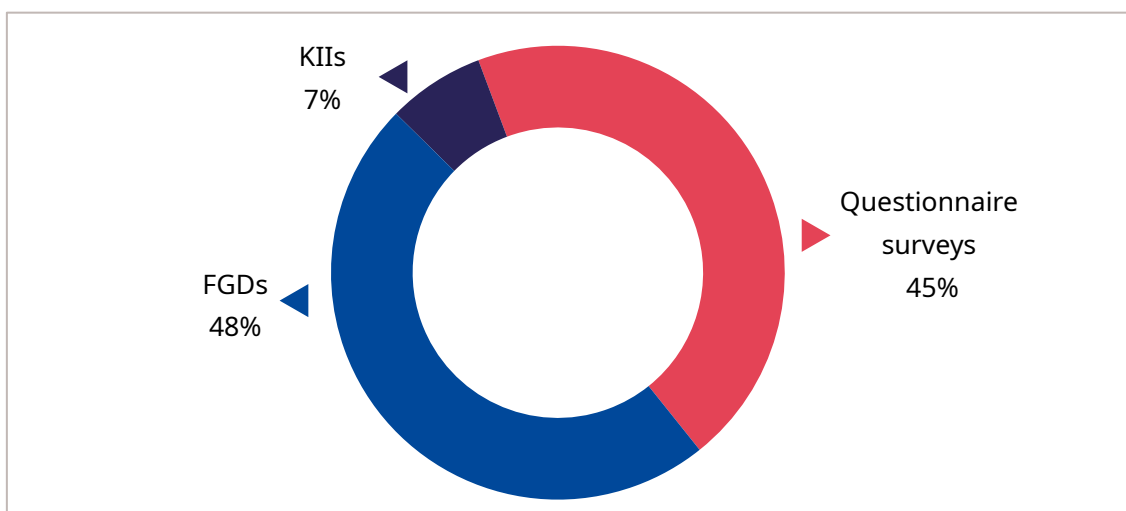
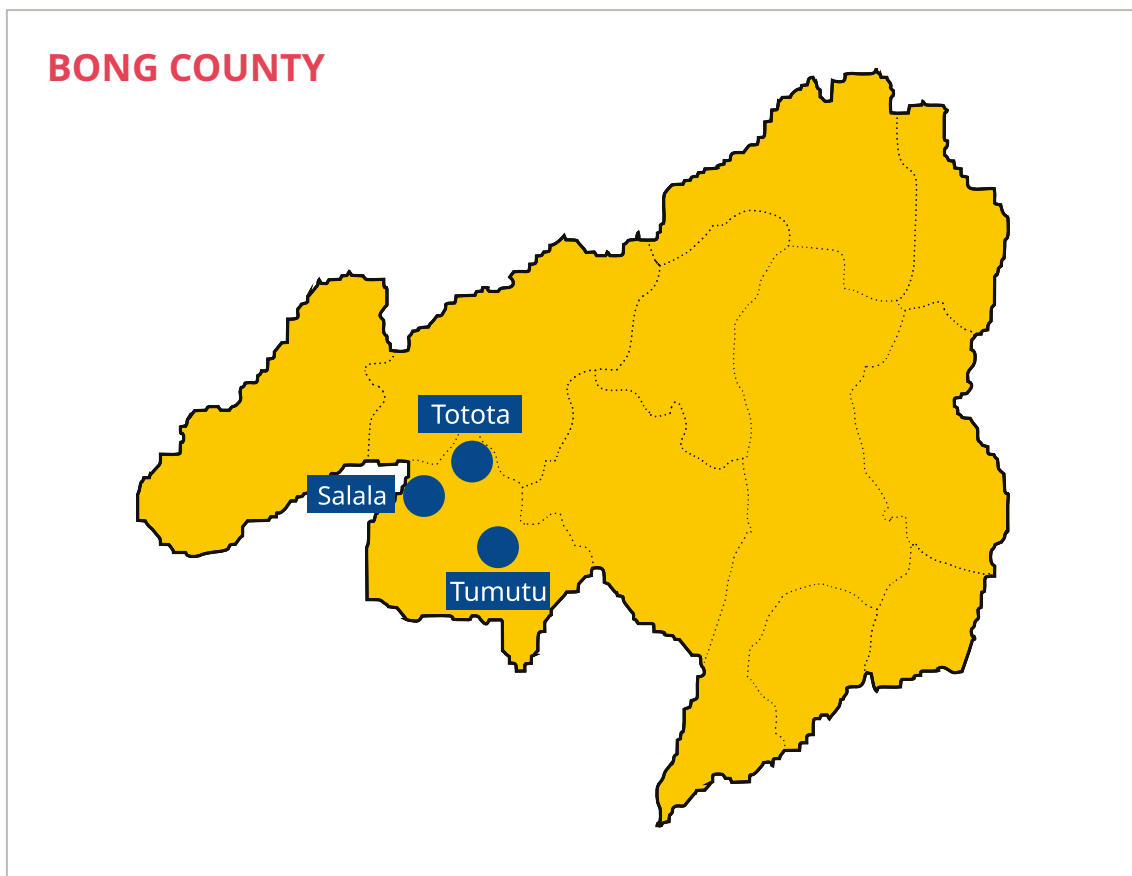


Table 1: Age of respondents (Questionnaire survey)

| | | Frequency | Per cent | Valid Per cent | Cumulative Per cent |
|-------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------------|---------------------|
| Valid | 15-19 | 3 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 3.3 |
| | 20-24 | 10 | 10.9 | 10.9 | 14.1 |
| | 25-29 | 19 | 20.7 | 20.7 | 34.8 |
| | 30-34 | 22 | 23.9 | 23.9 | 58.7 |
| | 35-39 | 5 | 5.4 | 5.4 | 64.1 |
| | 40- above | 33 | 35.9 | 35.9 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 92 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

► **Figure 14: Map of Bong County**

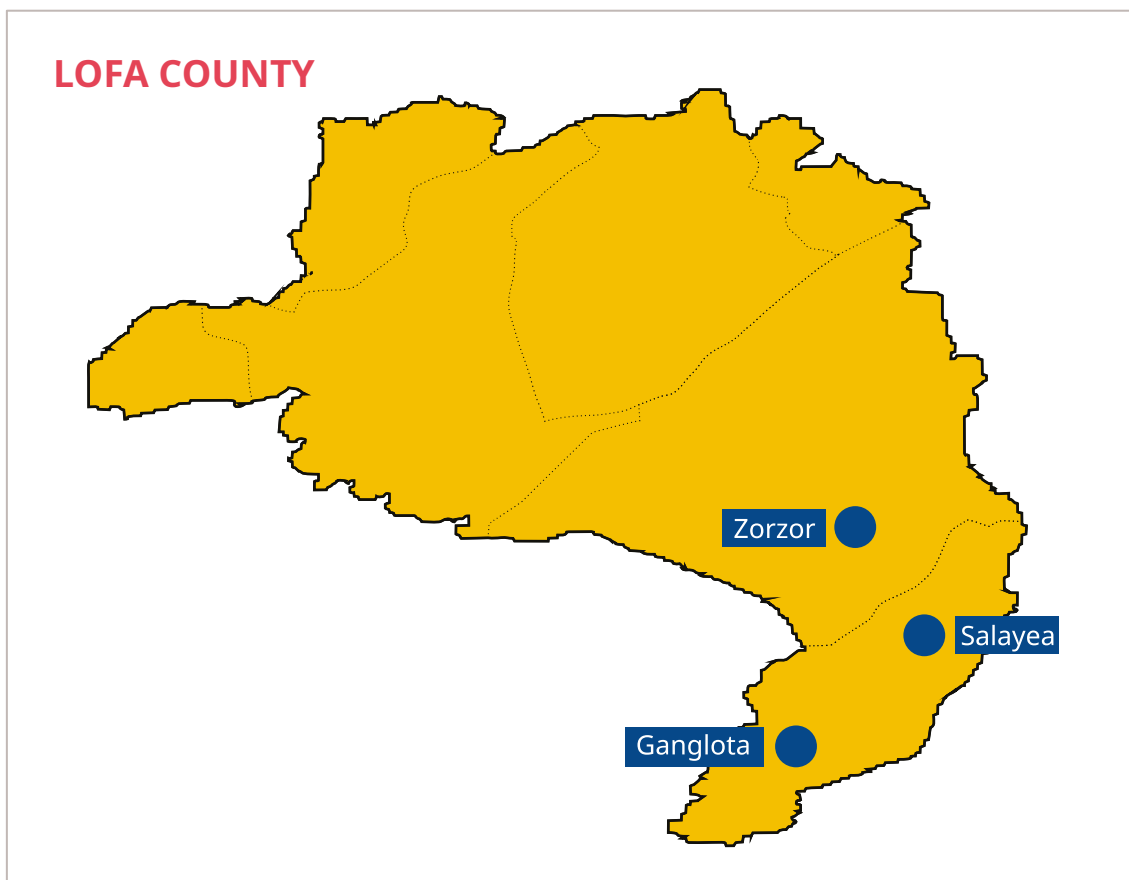
Conflict study areas: Totota, Salala/Tumutu, Bong



Source: (Liberia Mapping Peace population, 2019).

► **Figure 15: Map of Lofa County**

Conflict study areas: Zorzor, Salayea and Ganglota, Lofa County Liberia



Source: (Liberia Mapping Peace population, 2019).

Annex B: Data collection templates

Focus-group discussion template for all participants

Thank you very much for agreeing to speak with us about your community. We are interested to hear your opinion regarding youth-, gender- and land-related conflict in your community. (Be assured that the answers you give will not be directly attributed to you). The discussion will be recorded to ensure accuracy and provide facts for documentation. This discussion will have two parts. In the first part, we are interested to learn generally about your community and conflict; in the second, we would like to ask you a few more direct questions.

1. *Do you have any questions? If not, can we now proceed with the discussion?*
2. What are the main concerns regarding development opportunities for young people and women in this community?
3. Describe the reasons or the root causes of conflict in your community?
4. How is conflict resolved in your community?
5. What is the level of youth and women's participation in your community development?
6. How would you define conflict?
7. Have you experience of any conflict (disputes, rivalries, violent tensions) in your community?
8. If so, what kind of conflict or dispute are you aware of?
9. If not, why do you think that there is no conflict?
10. In your opinion, why does conflict happen?
11. Would you say that conflict is bad or good?
12. How do you know whether a conflict is serious or not?
13. Have you ever experienced conflict in your life?
14. Recently, has there been any violent incident or misunderstanding or tensions in this community?
15. If so, what happened? (Was anyone injured or killed, or was anyone's property damaged/ destroyed or burned?)
16. Name some of the major conflicts or tensions that have arisen in your community in the last five years?
17. What actors can be identified as spoilers? Why? Are they inadvertent or intentional spoilers?

If you could recommend any change in your community to promote development, peace and unity, what change would you like to see?

Specific focus-group questions for male participants in FGDs

Thank you very much for agreeing to speak with us about your community. We are interested to hear your opinion regarding youth-, gender- and land-related conflict in your community. (Be assured that the answers you give will not be directly attributed to you). The discussion will be recorded to ensure accuracy and provide facts for documentation. This discussion will have two parts. In the first part, we are interested to learn generally about your community and conflict; in the second part, we would like to ask you a few more direct questions.

1. Do you have any questions? If not, can we now proceed with the discussion?
2. What are the gender roles of men/male youth in the home and the community? Why?
3. Do men fully participate in domestic work in their homes?
4. What are the most common relationship issues between men and women? Why?
5. How are relationship issues that involve men and women resolved in your community?
6. What is the role of men in resolving conflicts in your community?
7. What actors can be identified as spoilers? Why? Are they inadvertent or intentional spoilers?
8. What would you recommend to promote men's and women's participation in socio-economic development in the home and community?

Specific focus-group questions for female participants in FGDs

Thank you very much for agreeing to speak with us about your community. We are interested to hear your opinion regarding youth-, gender- and land-related conflict in your community. (Be assured that the answers you give will not be directly attributed to you). The discussion will be recorded to ensure accuracy and provide facts for documentation. This discussion will have two parts. In the first part, we are interested to learn generally about your community and conflict; in the second part, we would like to ask you a few more direct questions.

1. Do you have any questions? If not, can we now proceed with the discussion?
2. Do women participate in resolving conflicts in this community? If so, what is their role (what role do they play and how often)?
3. Are there women's peace groups in your community?
4. Who are their main actors (in women's peace groups)?
5. What are women's interests, goals, positions and capacities in relation to community development?
6. What opportunities for conflict resolution are available in your community that women can identify?
7. What measures have women in this community taken or considered to resolve or avert conflicts?
8. What are the impacts of conflicts on women in your communities?
9. What actors can be identified as spoilers? Why? Are they inadvertent or intentional spoilers?
10. What recommendation(s) would you make for women's participation in peacebuilding and socio-economic development in your community?

Survey questionnaire templates

Informed Consent

My name is _____. Thank you very much for agreeing to speak with me about your community. I am interested to hear your opinion regarding youth-, gender- and land-related conflict in your community, and to ask a few more direct questions. (Be assured that the answers you give will not be directly attributed to you). The interview will last for 45 minutes. Your participation is voluntary. All the information you provide will be kept confidential and used only for the intended purpose.

Consent

I have read the above information and willingly agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Acknowledgement/signature/date: _____

Interviewer: _____

Biographical data

Name: _____

Age: _____ Gender: _____

Status/role: _____

Organization: _____ Location/county/town: _____

Contact: _____

What is your level of education?

- a. No formal education
- b. Primary level
- c. Junior-high level
- d. Senior-high level
- e. High-school graduate
- f. College/university level
- g. Other (please specify) _____

What is your social/economic status

- a. Student
- b. Self-employed
- c. Unemployed
- d. Worker/wage earner
- e. Other (please specify)

What are the main concerns regarding development opportunities for young people and women in this community?

- a. Unemployment
- b. Land disputes
- c. Lack of youth/women's participation in development
- d. Gender disparity
- e. Don't know
- f. Other (please specify)_____

Have you ever experienced any conflict (disputes, rivalries, violent tensions) in your community?

- a. Yes/no
- b. Please explain

Describe the reasons or the root causes of conflict in your community?

- a. Youth unemployment
- b. Land disputes
- c. Lack of youth/women's participation in development
- d. Border/boundary disputes
- e. Other (please specify)_____

How would you define conflict?

- a. War
- b. Tensions
- c. Fighting
- d. Rivalry
- e. No idea

How is conflict resolved in your community?

- a. Palava hut
- b. Dialogue
- c. Sporting events
- d. Other (please specify)_____
- e. No idea

What is the level of youth and women's participation in community development?

- a. Low
- b. Medium
- c. High

In your opinion, why is there conflict in your community?

- a. Because of lack opportunities for youth/women/men
- b. Because of gender disparity
- c. Because of land ownership
- d. Other (please specify) _____
- e. No idea

Would you say that conflict is bad or good?

- a. Bad
- b. Good
- c. No idea

How do you know whether a conflict (tension) is serious or not?

- a. When properties are destroyed
- b. When there is injury/death
- c. When properties are not destroyed
- d. When there is no injury/death
- e. Don't know

Recently, have there been any violent incidents or misunderstandings or tensions in this area?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. No idea

If so, what happened (Was anyone injured or killed, or was anyone's property damaged/destroyed or burned)?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. No idea

Name some of the major conflicts or tensions that have arisen in your community in the last five years?

- d. Religious disputes
- a. Land-related conflict
- b. Gender-related conflict
- c. Border/boundary-related conflict
- d. Property disputes
- e. Other (please specify) _____
- f. No idea

In the event of conflict, how do young people resolve it?

- a. Palava hut dialogue
- b. Peace conference
- c. Sport events
- d. Other (please specify)
- e. No idea

Are there any community mechanisms or resources known to you for resolving conflict?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

How effective are the current tools/approaches used in resolving conflict in your community? (Are they effective?)

- a. Effective
- b. Not effective
- c. Very effective
- d. No idea

Have there been any external interventions to resolve such conflicts? If so, what were they and who was involved?

- a. No
- b. Yes, peacebuilding office
- c. Yes, NGOs
- d. Other (please specify) _____
- e. No idea

Do women participate in resolving conflicts in this community?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

If so, how and to what extent?

How do people get information about what is taking place in the community?

- a. Community radio
- b. Word of mouth
- c. National radio
- d. Other (please specify)_____

What role do the media play in terms of increasing or decreasing conflict?

- a. Positive role
- b. Negative role
- c. Don't know

What is the most popular means of communication in this community?

- a. Radio
- b. TV
- c. Town criers
- d. Other (please specify)_____

In your view, what is required to promote and maintain peace and development in your community?

- a. Palava hut dialogue
- b. Peace conferences
- c. Youth empowerment
- d. Gender equity
- e. Religious tolerance

How would you describe the current trend in conflict in your area?

For example, high or low? How often and why?

What other opportunities for positive developments might there be that are not presently available in your community?

What lessons can be learned from these conflicts?

What does the community want to see in terms of peace, security, and the socio-economic and cultural integration of the people that live here?

What measures do you use to bring these conflicts to an end?

What do young people do for livelihood support in this community?

What is the extent of young people's participation in community development (governance, peace, and security)?

What are the main reasons for youth disengagement (non-involvement) in community decision-making?

What can be done to improve youth and women's engagement or involvement in your community?

What would you identify as the key factors (reasons) for the lack of unity and for insecurity in your community?

Do women participate in resolving conflicts in this community? (Yes/(No) _____

If so, what is their role (what do they do and how often)?

Are there women's peace groups in your community? (Yes/(No) _____

Who are the main actors? (for example, civil society groups, government officials, others (please specify))

What are (women's) interests, goals, positions and capacities in relation to community development?

Are there other opportunities for women's participation in conflict resolution in your community?

Describe the roles of men/male youth (gender) in your community?

Do men fully participate in domestic work in the home? (Yes/(No) _____

What are the most common relationship issues that involve/affect men and women? Why?

How are relationship issues resolved between men and women in the community?

What role do men play in resolving conflicts in your community? And why?

How important is employment in terms of peace-building and socio-economic development in your community?

What recommendations would you make to promote unity, peace, and development among youth in this community?

Key information interview templates

Informant's biographical data:

Name: _____

Position: _____

Number of years living in the area: _____

Gender: _____ Age: _____

Organization: _____ Location/county/town: _____

Contact: _____

Thank you very much for agreeing to speak with me about your community. I am interested to hear about your opinion regarding youth-, gender- and land-related conflict in your community. (Be assured that the answers you give will not be directly attributed to you). The interview will be recorded to ensure accuracy and provide for documentation. This interview will have two parts. In the first part, I am interested to learn generally about your community and conflict; in the second part, I would like to ask you a few more direct questions.

1. Do you have any questions? If not, can we now proceed with the interview?
2. Kindly tell me about your role in this community/town?
3. If you were to describe your community to a stranger, what would you tell them?
4. Would you say that your community is peaceful?
5. If so, why? If not, why not?
6. Generally, what would you say about conflicts? Can you explain?
7. What are young people's and women's major concerns in this community?
What are they usually worried about? And why?
8. What are most of the arguments or conflicts about in this community/town?
9. Who tends to be involved?
10. What do you think causes these types of arguments or conflicts?
11. Do you think these types of conflicts can be resolved?
12. If so, by what means?
13. What process is used to resolve conflicts or arguments?
14. Who is involved in resolving these conflicts or arguments?
15. Do you believe that the means used to resolve conflicts are effective?

Now I want to ask you a series of questions about different groups of people:

1. What do you think is the role of youth when it comes to conflicts?
2. What do you think is the role of women when it comes to conflict?
3. What do you think is the role of the government when it comes to resolving conflicts in your community/town?
4. What do you think is the role of the police/security forces when it comes to conflicts in this community/town?
5. What role do the media play in conflicts in your community/town?
6. What actors can be identified as spoilers? Why? Are they inadvertent or intentional spoilers?
7. If you could recommend any change in your community to promote development, peace and unity, what change would you like to see?

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