

Sexual Reproductive and Health Rights (SRHR) can also be compromised by gaps in the legislation as for example, the revised Liberian rape code requires abortion to be sanctioned by two physicians who have certified in writing the reasons why the abortion is necessary,<sup>26</sup> a requirement difficult to attain for women and girls in rural settings as well as for women and girls with disabilities.

The challenges the security and justice institutions face in the provision of services to SGBV survivors are immense. Among these are challenges related to logistical and financial resources in handling SGBV cases such as transportation of survivors, tracing and referral of cases, communications, and operational resources, amongst many others. The recent capacity needs assessment done by the Spotlight Initiative for the security and justice sector also revealed a huge capacity gap within these institutions to effectively prevent and mitigate violence against women and girls in Liberia and provide for accessible and safe support measures for women and girls with disabilities. The assessment found out that most of the law enforcement personnel are stationed in Monrovia with minimal deployment in the counties impeding timely prevention and response. The report further alluded to the worsening situation in the capacity of these institutions comparing it to the previous similar capacity assessment conducted in 2019 attributing it to the economic challenge and dwindling resources especially following the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL)'s withdrawal<sup>27</sup>.

Additional challenges lie in the costs incurred in accessing the referral pathway, which often lead survivors to resort to alternative dispute resolutions. Indeed, it is mostly family members, survivors, communities and CSOs that must bear the costs related to SGBV referral pathways and not the duty bearers. This is due to the limited resources allotted to the justice and security sectors.

The lack of access to justice and accessible services for survivors is another major challenge identified. One-stop centres are not present in some counties, including in SGBV hotspots such as Nimba and Lofa. There are only 12 one-stop centres in the country and 3 specialized SGBV courts (Montserrado, Nimba, and Bong), which remain hard to access for those living in rural areas, where the needs are generally high.

As part of SGBV response services, safe homes have been operating in Liberia since 2012. However, there are currently only five safe homes in the whole country. Through Spotlight's support, the existing safe homes were refurbished to continue service provision. Given the high prevalence of SGBV, the 5 safe homes are not enough to address the needs in the various counties. It is also important to provide livelihood pathways to survivors once at the safe home/or after. EU TVET – Youth Rising programme and agriculture training could provide survivors with skills that may lead them to a gainful employment. TVET schools, for instance, are connected with local CSOs in the counties raising awareness for SGBV survivors to enrol in TVET programmes, which offer, among others, agriculture, aquaculture, hospitality, and fashion skills training. Synergies could be also built with our upcoming Private Sector programme focusing on inclusive and sustainable agriculture value chains. SGBV survivors could also benefit from trainings and self-employment opportunities.

In addition, the services provided should be made more accessible to persons with disabilities by including sign language, audio material or easy-to-read texts, as well as accessible infrastructure, while offering training on disability rights and particularly on gender and disability and SGBV to staff among other measures.

**Identification of main stakeholders** and corresponding institutional and/or organisational issues (mandates, potential roles, and capacities) to be covered by the Action:

The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Protection (MoGCSP) will be in the lead. Established in 2001, the MGCSP serves as the driving force of the Government for the implementation of regional and international human rights instruments signed and ratified by the Government.

Relevant line ministries such as the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior Affairs, and Ministry of Health are among the key players for SGBV prevention, protection, and response in the planned interventions at both national and sub-national level. Gender focal points of these ministries and agencies will also be involved. The Ministry of Finance and Development Planning will be involved concerning issues of gender budgeting, while the Ministry of Education will be consulted and targeted for school-level SGBV prevention and response, including for

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.law.cornell.edu/women-and-justice/resource/offenses\\_against\\_the\\_family\\_chapter\\_16\\_penal\\_law\\_-\\_title\\_26\\_-\\_liberian\\_code\\_of\\_laws\\_revised](https://www.law.cornell.edu/women-and-justice/resource/offenses_against_the_family_chapter_16_penal_law_-_title_26_-_liberian_code_of_laws_revised).

<sup>27</sup> Capacity need assessment of Justice and Security Institutions on Prevention, Protection and Response to SGBV, HTP and Violence Against Women and Girls. Spotlight Initiative (2022).