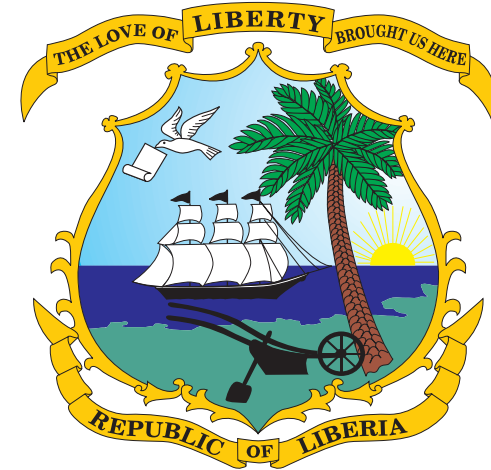


REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA



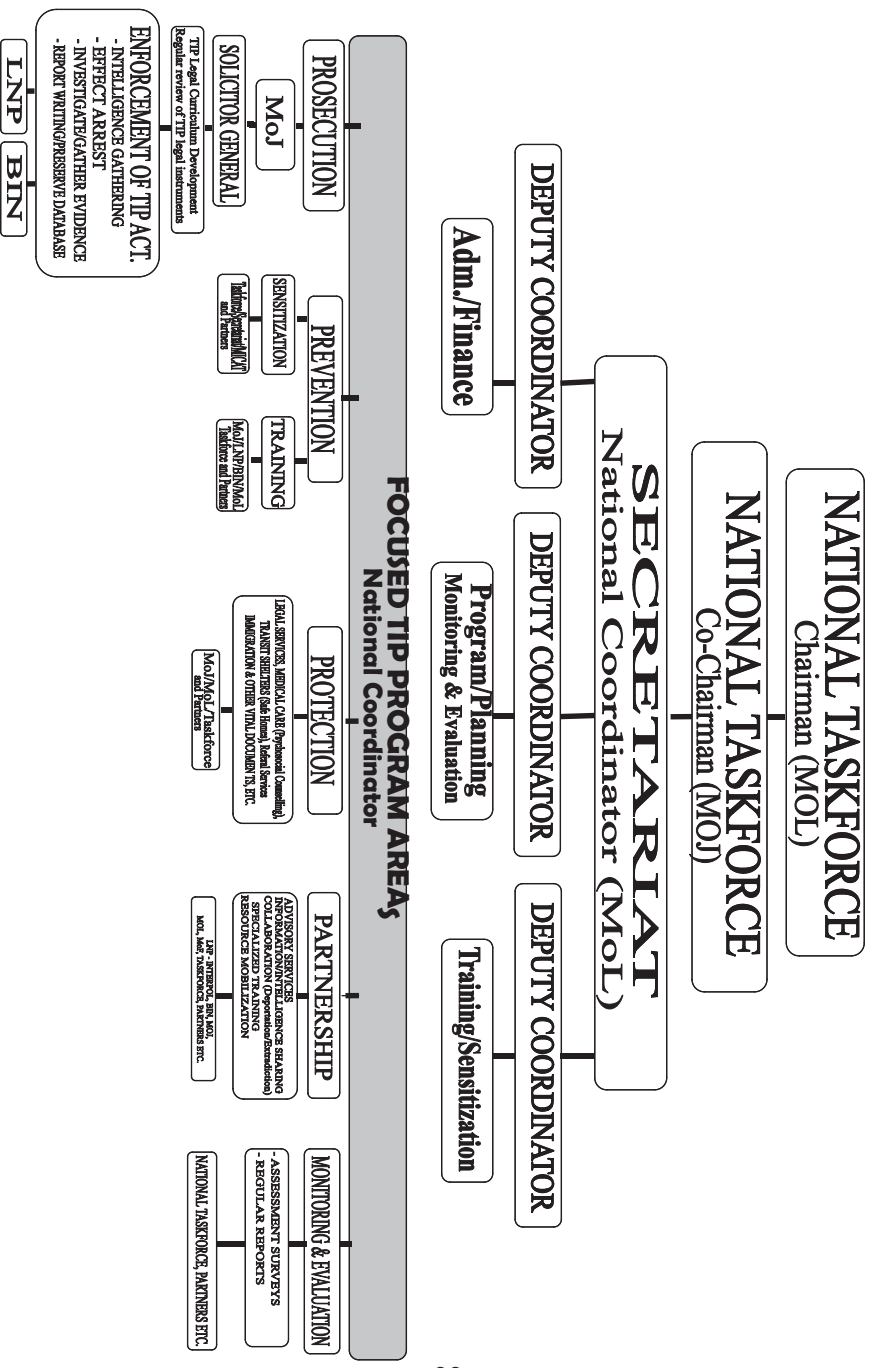
FIVE-YEAR NATIONAL ACTION PLAN IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE TRAFFICKING OF HUMAN BEINGS

2013 – 2018



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Foreword by the Minister of Labor

The Ministry of Labor has the statutory mandate to lead and direct the national fight against human trafficking in Liberia. The Ministry is working in close collaboration with other ministries and agencies of Government, including the Ministry of Justice, in leading this campaign.

Emerging from a devastation of fourteen years of civil crisis complemented by the gradual restoration of the rule of law, human trafficking, among other Transnational Organized Crimes, has become a major post-conflict national security challenge. Responding to this situation, and recognizing the significance of putting in place the requisite legal framework to deal with matters of human trafficking in Liberia, the Transitional Legislative Assembly of the National Transitional Government in 2005 passed an Act that banned and criminalized all forms of human trafficking in Liberia.

The Act specifically established that Trafficking In Persons (TIPs) shall mean “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a person by means of the threat or use of force or other means of coercion, or by abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or by the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation”.

Moreover, as recently as April, 2013 the Government of Liberia also amended the Penal Law regarding Extortion, Environmental Crimes, Trafficking in Human Beings and Illicit Migrant Smuggling, thereby re-enforcing the legal framework responsible for dealing with these inter-related international organized crime. Trafficking of Human Beings and illicit migrant smuggling are usually committed simultaneously.

Moreover, prior to putting in place the legal framework and relevant structures to face up to the menace of TIP in the country, the Government of Liberia had earlier acceded to the United Nations (UN) Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, which came into being in 2000. Additionally, Liberia also acceded to, and/or ratified, other major conventions and treaties for the promotion and protection of the fundamental rights of women and children in particular.

These include, for example, *the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948; the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979; the Beijing Platform of Action, 1995; and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989. Others include, the World Summit for Children, 1990; the ILO Convention on Worst Form of Child Labor, 1999; A World Fit for Children – UN General Assembly Special Session on Children, 2002; and, the African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child, 1990.*

In the meantime, as Government grappled with the challenging activities of TIP in the country, the 2012-13 US State Department global assessment of Trafficking in Persons (TIP), inter alia, confirmed that “Liberia faces a challenge with human trafficking in various forms: sex trafficking, of girls and women; forced labor of children in diamond and gold mines and in other forms of agriculture, in street vending, in mines, and in homes as involuntary domestic servants”. The report further noted that Liberia “ranked as Tier 2 Watch List in the 2011 and 2012 Trafficking in Persons State Department Report”, and could be further downgraded to the bottom of the list to Tier 3. This could lead to sanctions, if concrete actions were not taken by Government to demonstrate further seriousness in the campaign against TIP.

Against the backdrop of these developments, the Government of Liberia, through the office of its Attorney General, issued an official “Statement of Reaffirmation” of Government's continued commitment to combat the threat of human trafficking in Liberia in April 2013.

Accordingly, this National Action Plan against human trafficking represents an illustration of commitment on the part of Government to match other prior actions it has taken in meeting basic national benchmarks and international obligations in the campaign against TIP in Liberia. The Plan encompasses clearly defined sets of program strategies aimed at concretely dealing with all matters of human trafficking within the bailiwick of the Republic in a much coordinated and sustained manner. We look forward to a safe and secured global environment in which the dignity of the world's women and children would be respected and protected.



F. Juah Lawson (Cllr.)
MINISTER

CONCLUSION

By this National Action Plan, Government's determination to combat human trafficking in Liberia in a well coordinated, self-sustaining and proactive way cannot be over emphasized. The absence of such an Action Plan has over the years, largely relegated Government's efforts in the fight against TIP to one of tailing and responding to events rather than acting proactively. Importantly, besides its strive to enable Liberia satisfy a fundamental international requirement expected of all countries in the global fight against this international organized crime, the Plan is primarily aimed at protecting Liberia's national security interest, within the context of a Sub-regional approach.

As the fight against human trafficking is global and endless, so will Liberia's anti-human trafficking strategy be aligned. Thus, this Five-Year Action Plan will be subject to regular reviews, adjustments and subsequent renewals after every set of five years. It is for this reason; the Plan has been deliberately integrated within Liberia's five-year national development plan – the Agenda for Transformation (Aft).

While Government's commitment to addressing manifestations of human trafficking in Liberia is a locally-driven, self-sustainable strategy, to be pursued within the reach of its meager resources, Government also realizes that it would have to locate this herculean fight regionally and internationally. The trappings of human trafficking are regionally and globally entrenched, as a criminal lucrative enterprise. Therefore, this campaign against human trafficking would obviously be costly and prolonged, and would require a regional and global approach. Therefore, Government shall endeavor seeking advice, technical and material assistance and other forms of support through bi-lateral, regional and international collaboration and cooperation. Seeking advice and other forms of assistance from countries and institutions vested with richer experiences and expertise in these matters are vital policy option to Government.

Government therefore pledges to remain open and realistic, and will strive to seek greater avenues in the global fight against the illicit trafficking of human beings and the illicit smuggling of migrant labor (women and children in particular), and all other Transnational Organized Crimes within its borders, through collective endeavors.

Partnership			
Action	Timeline	Responsible Parties	Performance Indicator
Objective 4.1: To enable interagency information exchange, and foster domestic, bilateral and multilateral collaboration			
Support anti-trafficking initiatives by CSOs and the public at large		National Taskforce, CSOs	Anti-trafficking initiative by CSOs and public at large supported
Establish information exchange and coordination framework between/among local authorities, international organizations, and CSOs, including INTERPOL, etc.		National Taskforce and partners	Information exchange and coordination framework amongst parties established and enhanced
Establish regular TIP engagement forum (roundtable, working group, consortium, high-level group meetings, etc.)		National Taskforce, CSOs and other partners	Regular TIP consultations through different forum established
Domesticate and implement regional and international agreements on TIP		MoJ, MoF, MoL and other taskforce members	Regional and international agreements on TIP domesticated and implemented
Collaborate			
Objective 4.2: To explore international assistance for advanced training and financial support			
Liaise with partners to secure relevant specialized domestic and international training		National Taskforce, Development partners	Specialized domestic and international training secured
Constructively engage development partners to provide technical support for TIP initiatives		National Taskforce, Development partners	# of technical supports provided

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS USED IN “STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK” AND NATIONAL ACTION PLAN 2013 -2018

GoL	Government of Liberia
IOC	International Organized Crimes
BIN	Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization
INCHR	Independent National Commission on Human Rights
BCR	Bureau of Corrections & Rehabilitation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
LNP	Liberian National Police
LRRRC	Liberian Refugee Repatriation and Resettlement Commission
MICAT	Ministry of Information, Culture Affairs and Tourism
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoGD	Ministry of Gender and Development
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoL	Ministry of Labor
MoHSW	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare
MIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoT	Ministry of Transportation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
RIA	Roberts International Airport
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
TCU	Transnational Crimes Unit
TIP	Trafficking In Persons
TVPA	Trafficking Victim Protection Acts
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WACPS	Women and Children Protection Section

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Five-Year National Action Plan signifies the Government of Liberia's zero tolerance stance in the fight against all forms of human trafficking in Liberia. As a program strategy put in place to Shepard the national campaign against Trafficking in Persons (TIP), the Plan is a direct response to the local, regional and international demand for such a broad program strategy as a major requirement. The plan is part of a series of inter-related prior and ongoing actions by GoL in response to the threats and challenges engendered by this serious transnational crime which uses Liberia as both a transit and destination point.

By 2005, the GoL had established the legal framework to combat human trafficking in the country through an Act of the National Legislature that made human trafficking a criminal offense. This was followed by the establishment of a National Task force along with its Secretariat, as well as a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of the The 2005 Act was further strengthened when it was amended in April 2013, to include “illicit migrant smuggling” - an element of human trafficking – that has on many occasions been associated with other forms of trafficking in Liberia.

Notwithstanding the establishment of these legal and structural frameworks as some key achievements by Government, the lack of a national action plan to lead a coordinated and sustained fight against (TIP) in Liberia was a major challenge.

The drafting of this National Action Plan was informed by a wide range of stakeholder consultations and shared experiences through the Task force membership (both local and international). Some of the experiences benefitting the process were drawn from challenges, lessons, and outcomes of previous and ongoing TIP cases being addressed by Ministry of Justice. Additionally, institutional coordination and cooperation amongst actors in the fight against human trafficking was identified as a fundamental requirement for success. While drafting the National Action Plan, we also pulled from the experiences of other countries, including those of the ECOWAS sub-region.

The Plan is a five-year program strategy, renewable every five years. The Plan provides for its incorporation into Government's five-year national development program (the Agenda for Transformation – AfT), to ensure recurrent budgetary and sustainable support. In terms of its vision, the Plan outlines four (4) program areas of focus: 1) Prevention through education, public awareness and other outreach initiatives; effective intelligence gathering and surveillance, as well other proactive programs;

Provide all required legal assistance to victims (women and children) and ensure their rights are respected and protected under the law		Taskforce, MoJ, MoL, LNP, BIN	Provision of all legal assistance to victims guaranteed and ensured
Provide victims with all security protection to freely bear witness and confront adverse party		Taskforce, MoJ, MoL, LNP, BIN	Security protection of victims ensured
Provide psychological support to women who are required to appear before a court in criminal proceedings		MoJ/SGBV Unit,	Psychological support provided
Ensure the exclusion of suspected victims, by legislative provision, from any proceedings for involvement in unlawful activities during alleged trafficking offences		MoJ/ Prosecution	# of suspected victims excluded from legal proceedings for involvement in unlawful act alleged trafficking offences

Establish missing child/children alert and system		National Taskforce	Missing child alert system established
Establish special anti-TIP programs for children protection with UNICEF, IOM and other partners		Taskforce, Gender, MOL, MoHSW, MIA, UNICEF and other partners	Special collaboration mechanism between Taskforce and relevant partners on TIP victims - children established
Establish special reintegration programs for children with UNICEF and other partners		Taskforce, Gender, MoL, MIA, UNICEF	Special reintegration TIP-child-victim programs established

Prosecution			
Action	Timeline	Responsible Parties	Performance Indicator
Objective 3.1: Implement the legislation and effectively investigate allegations of TIP			
Ensure legislative provision for suspected victim to give evidence through any/all legal means during investigation and/or prosecution		Legislature, National Taskforce	Legislative provision ensured
Effect arrest, investigation, indictment, and expeditious prosecution of suspected TIP perpetrator(s)		Taskforce, MoJ (offices of County Attorney , Solicitor General) LNP, BIN, Judiciary	Effective enforcement of TIP legislation established and ensured
MOJ/Prosecution to coordinate with Anti-Human Trafficking Unit, suspected victims of sexual exploitation and/or labor exploitation, SGBV Unit, and other organizations in the prosecution of TIP offenses		MoJ/Prosecution	Prosecution of human trafficking coordinated
Designate/appoint a special team of prosecutors with requisite training to prosecute human trafficking		MoJ/ Prosecution	Special team of trained prosecutors designated/appointed
Ensure free and fair trial, including due process of law for suspected perpetrator(s)		Taskforce, MOJ, Judiciary	Free and fair trial for suspected perpetrators ensured
When convicted, ensure perpetrator(s) face the full weight of the law, including serving court sentence and paying for damages inflicted on victims		Taskforce, MOJ, Judiciary, and Bureau of Correction and Rehabilitation (BCR)	Facing the full weight of the law by Suspected perpetrator(s) ensured
Publicize successful prosecutions against traffickers more widely in source and transit countries		National Taskforce	# successful prosecution publicized
Objective 3.2: Provide required supports to suspected victims during criminal proceedings			
Ensure the rights of victims are protected at all times		Taskforce, MoJ, LNP, BIN, MoL	Protection of Rights of victims ensured
Provide all required legal assistance to victims (women and children) and ensure their		Taskforce, MoJ, MoL, LNP, BIN	Provision of all legal assistance to victims guaranteed and ensured

2) Protection includes provision of various forms of care for victims (health care, lodging in secured homes, linking victims with families and other networks, and other forms of supports to reduce anxieties and post-traumatic stress); 3) Prosecution which is a fundamental step in the Government's fight against trafficking. 4) Partnership entails coordination and collaboration between local actors, on the one hand, and partnership with regional and international institutions, on the other, for various forms of cooperation in the global fight against the trafficking of human beings.

The Plan also has an implementation matrix containing a set of goals and targets as well as time frames for the achievement of measurable results. The Plan also proposes an expanded organizational structure of the Task force to make it more functional and effective as the coordinating point responsible to drive the national fight against trafficking in Liberia. All of these essentialities embodied within the National Action Plan are intended to make the Plan serve as a living tool in the national campaign against illicit human trafficking in Liberia.

SECTION 1:AN OVERVIEW OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

WHAT IS HUMAN TRAFFICKING?

Human trafficking is an abhorrent act that impinges upon the human rights of an individual and poses a grave threat to human dignity everywhere. The United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (also known as the Palermo Protocol) clearly defines human trafficking as the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation or the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs. Similarly, the 2005 Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons within the Republic of Liberia (the “Act”) also defines human trafficking as : “The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a person by means of the threat of use of force or other means of coercion, adoption, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or by giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation”.

Trafficking in Persons is distinct from and should not be confused with human smuggling. Human smuggling, as defined by the 2000 UN Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, is the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident. While acknowledging the distinction between the two crimes, in an effort to swiftly and effectively address both of these societal ills, in 2013, Liberia amended the 2005 Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons by incorporating provisions on the “smuggling of migrants” to ensure that our laws cover the vast majority of people who are victimized.

Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Available at <http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf>
Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Available at <http://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/UNTOC/Publications/TOC%20Convention/TOCebook-e.pdf>

Liaise with relevant national and international organizations (NGOs and INGOs, governmental, etc.) to provide potential/suspected victim with welfare support such as food, clothing, etc.		Taskforce, Gender, MoHSW, CSOs and other partners	Welfare support provided through partnership collaboration
Objective 2.3: Ensure free access to legal aid and redress, information on all relevant proceedings, and due compensation for suspected victims			
The MoJ to provide legal advice and legal aid to potential/suspected victims of trafficking in a language understandable		Taskforce, MoJ, MoL, MoFA	Mechanisms for legal aid and services to victims established
Develop information tools (leaflet, recording, etc.) clearly spelling out due compensation and the procedures /requirements for obtaining it		National Taskforce, MoJ, MICAT	Due compensation information tools developed
Objective 2.4: Enhance identification procedures, and repatriation of potential/suspected victim(s) including women and children			
Develop reintegration plans for individual suspected victims			Reintegration plan developed
Provide supports to assist the reintegration/integration of suspected victims into the Liberian society		Taskforce, gender, MoHSW, MIA, MoJ	Reintegration support provided according to plan
Establish procedures to repatriate or integrate suspected victims voluntarily			Repatriation or reintegration procedures established
Objective 2.5: Encourage reporting of TIP offenses and ensure protection for reporters, witnesses, and vulnerable associates of potential suspected victims			
Establish special community-based programs to encourage community exposure of TIP activities		Taskforce, community-based groups, LNP, BIN, MIA	Community-based approach to expose TIP activities established
Encourage community policing on TIP activities through sensitization campaign		Taskforce, community-based groups, LNP, BIN, MoL, MoJ, MIA	Anti-TIP community-based policing put in place
Establish special awards for exposure of TIP activities in community through the media		Taskforce, MoL, MoJ, MiA, partners	Special anti-TIP exposure awards established
Design and implement clear protection program measures to protect TIP whistle blowers/reporters and witnesses, including any of their vulnerable family member or associates		National Taskforce	Clear protection program measures designed and implemented
Objective 2.6: Establish and implement mechanism to enable institutional co-operation in the search and protection for missing children			

PROTECTION			
Action	Timeline	Responsible Parties	Performance Indicator
Objective 2.1: Provide needed protections to potential/suspected victims of human trafficking			
Ensure access to information relating to any security risk and provide possible language interpreter (s) to ensure successful communication, investigation and prosecution		Taskforce MoJ, MoFA, MoL, LNP, BIN	Access to information and foreign language interpreter(s) provided to ensure successful communication, investigation and prosecution
Provide medical, including psycho-social counseling for suspected victims		Taskforce, MoHSW, MoJ, Gender	Medical, psycho-social counseling provided
Provide minimum, temporary financial assistance to suspected victims (women in particular) mainly for purpose of remittance		Taskforce, MoL, MoJ, Gender, partners	Minimum financial assistance to victims (women in particular) for remittance purpose provided
Design and deliver training on indicators of trafficking and counter trafficking for key Government stakeholders		National Taskforce	Training on indicators of trafficking and counter-trafficking for key GoL stakeholders designed
Make the publication or broadcasting of any information not authorized by a judge or legal authority an offence when doing so exposes the identities of alleged victim (s)		Taskforce MoJ, MoL, Judiciary	Regulation on Non-disclosure of victims' identities put in place
Ensure that trafficked children have access to education without barrier		National Taskforce, MoE, MoGD, MoJ	Trafficked child/children are in school
Objective 2.2: Establish mechanism to obtain temporary immigration documents and accommodation for suspected victims(including children) of human trafficking to support related investigation and/or prosecution			
Process and issue appropriate immigration documents to suspected victims to ensure safety, and facilitate successful investigation and prosecution of suspected perpetrators		Taskforce, MoJ, MoL, LNP, BIN,	Appropriate immigration documents to suspected victims processed and issued
Provide temporary shelters, psycho-social counseling, accommodation homes for potential and suspected victims of human trafficking		Taskforce, Gender, MoHSW, MoL, MoJ	Temporary transit shelters for victims secured and provided
Liaise with relevant national and international organizations (NGOs and INGOs, governmental, etc.) to provide potential/suspected victim with welfare support such as food, clothing, etc.		Taskforce, Gender, MoHSW, CSOs and other partners	Welfare support provided through partnership collaboration

The Palermo Protocol also identifies three constituent elements of Human trafficking: 1) The Act (what is done or the specific action taken; this may include recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons); 2) The Means (how the act is carried out or the method used to perform the act; this may include threats or the use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim); and 3) The Purpose (why the act is carried out or the motive or the intent of the act; for example, sexual exploitation, forced labour, slavery and related practices, or the removal of human organs to be sold).

SECTION 2: HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN LIBERIA

Human trafficking, like other transnational crimes, does not take place in a vacuum; as a criminal business venture whose modes of operation are based on fraud, deception, manipulation and intrigue, it operates within “enabling environments” and thrives on certain weaknesses in society, including weak security and other governance structures. Speaking to this point, the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Liberia (NSSRL, 2008), noted that “International drugs and human trafficking networks span the globe, preying on conflict and post-conflict countries as transit points and new markets like terrorists, the traffickers frequently seek a weak spot as a backdoor route”.

A number of socio-economic, cultural, and political factors have been fodder for these “enabling environments” of human trafficking in Liberia. According to the United States' Department of State 2013 Trafficking in Persons report, Liberia is a source, transit and destination country for men, women and children subjected to forced labor and sex trafficking. Many of Liberia's cultural practices expose its women and children to criminal exploitation and manipulation, including sex-trafficking in children, child labor, and other forms of criminal ventures. For a variety of reasons, including poverty, traditional family structure, many Liberian families send their children to live with relatives outside of their community of origin. A substantial number of children who live with relatives, however, are often exploited for labor, exposed to intense domestic servitude and prevented from receiving an adequate education. Other negative cultural practices such as early and arranged marriages for young girls often result in sexual exploitation and contribute to the growing number of TIP cases.

Vulnerability of Liberian women and children, a phenomenal outcome of the Liberian civil conflict, also contributes to human trafficking in post-conflict Liberia. An unprecedented number of Liberia's children were directly negatively impacted by the civil war. The MOHSW records show that a total of 250,000 children were affected as war-victims.

Establish TIP screening desk within the BIN at all entry and exit points/ports of Liberia;		MoJ, BIN, MoL (National Taskforce)	TIP Screening desk within BIN at exit/entry points established
Encourage reform of Liberia's Immigration Law and visa system		National Taskforce (MoJ/BIN, IOM)	Liberia's Immigration Law and Visa System reviewed and reformed
Enhance co-operation among border control security institutions to combat human trafficking		MoJ, LNP, BIN	Security institutions at border points cooperate and coordinate in the fight against human trafficking
Organize and provide training for all security personnel serving at border points/ports		MoJ, LNP, partners	Training for all border security personnel organized and provided
<i>Objective 1.5: Create protective environment and reduce children vulnerability to trafficking and other identity documents</i>			
Reinforce security controls mechanism over the issuance and delivery of passports, Visas/travel documents		MoF, MoJ, BIN	Security control mechanisms over the issuance and delivery of passports, visas/travel documents established/re-enforced
Review birth certificate issuance mechanism, processes and procedures and recommend relevant improvement		MoL, MoF, BIN	Mechanisms, processes, and procedures over birth certificate issuance reviewed and improvement recommended
Restructure/reform institutions, processes and procedures, and standard for obtaining birth and naturalization, travel, and other key identity documents		National Taskforce, MoHSW, MoJ, MoL, MoF	Institutions, processes and procedures for obtaining birth certificates and naturalization, travel and other identification documents restructured and reformed
<i>Objective 1.5: Create protective environment and reduce children vulnerability to trafficking and traffickers</i>			
Establish working group on child trafficking and ensure regular engagement		Taskforce, Gender, MoL, MoJ, CSOs	Working groups on child trafficking regular engagement established

Objective 1.2: Raise awareness about human trafficking			
Develop TIP public awareness strategy and annual work plan		National Taskforce, and partners, including CSOs	TIP public awareness strategy and annual work plan developed
Launch and undertake regular TIP awareness campaign throughout Liberia		National Taskforce and partners, including CSOs	TIP awareness campaign formally launched and ongoing
Develop TIP awareness and education materials		National Taskforce and partners, including CSOs	TIP awareness and education is ongoing using developed materials
Partner with the print and electronic media, and major sporting events organizers/institutions to carryout TIP education and advert		National Taskforce and partners, including CSOs	TIP education and advert are regularly carryout through established partnership with electronic/print media, and major sporting events organizers
Involve local communities and learning/educational institutions in TIP awareness creations		National Taskforce and partners, including CSOs	Local communities and education institutions involved with awareness creation
Objective 1.3: To strengthen border controls			
Establish TIP screening desk within the BIN at all entry and exit points/ports of Liberia;		MoJ, BIN, MoL (National Taskforce)	TIP Screening desk within BIN at exit/entry points established
Encourage reform of Liberia's Immigration Law and visa system		National Taskforce (MoJ/BIN, IOM)	Liberia's Immigration Law and Visa System reviewed and reformed

Of that number, 605 children's parents could not be traced or identified. The civil conflict correspondingly led to the proliferation of orphanage homes or institutions throughout the country.

The MOHSW further shows that as a direct consequence of the Liberian civil crisis, the total number of post-conflict orphanage homes throughout the country rose to 114, with about 42 in Montserrado alone, while the rest were largely concentrated in Bassa, Nimba, Bong Counties. Many of those homes were rated as substandard by MOHSW's standards and/or were unauthorized, and had to be closed down. To date, the number of orphanage homes in Liberia has been reduced from 114 to about 82. The MOHSW policy of closure of substandard orphanages remains in force in the best interest of Liberia's children. It should be emphasized that substandard orphanage homes in themselves do not necessarily represent human trafficking or the trafficking in children, however, many orphanages serve as conduits for trafficking of children.

2013 Trafficking in Persons Report. Available at <http://monrovia.usembassy.gov/reports/tips.html>

The proprietors of two of such disbanded orphanage homes are being investigated by the WACPS/LNP in two separate suspected TIP cases, involving 13 and 18 children respectively that were all recruited from Bong County in early 2013. It is against the background foregoing and other disturbing situations that prompted the Government to critically review and overhaul the processes and procedures involved in the adoption of Liberia's children, establishment of orphanage homes in the country as well as the temporary closure and overhaul of the Vital Statistics Section of the MOHSW, which is responsible for the issuance of documents necessary for inter-country travel such as birth certificates.

SECTION 3: THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

I. National Framework:

The Liberian Government has made concerted efforts to address and ultimately eradicate trafficking through and within its borders. As previously noted, in 2005 the Liberian Legislature passed the comprehensive Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons within the Republic. In defining the terms and scope of what constitutes trafficking in persons in Liberia, the Act noted the following: “That form and immediately after the passage of this Act, recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a person, by means of the threat or use of force or other means of coercion or by abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or by giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation shall be a criminal offense within the Republic of Liberia”.

Liberia's approach to effectively combat human trafficking is tailored to the Palermo Protocol. By doing so, Liberia strives to effectively ensure that its national framework to attack and eliminate trafficking is consistent with internationally accepted and recognized standards, definitions, and procedures. Liberia's framework also anchored on the Four Pillars Programs: Prevention, Protection, Prosecution and Partnership.

II. Anti-Human Trafficking National Taskforce

The Liberian Government has established an Anti-Human Trafficking National Taskforce (the “Taskforce”). The Taskforce is the principal vehicle for leading, managing, directing, coordinating, monitoring, and undertaking all program activities against human trafficking in Liberia. Article II, Section I of the Act mandates that the President establish an inter-agency taskforce to develop and implement a National Plan for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons. Such a task force shall include all aspects of trafficking, including sex trafficking and labor trafficking.

The Act also mandates the President to appoint the members of the Taskforce, which shall include: the Ministers of Labor, Justice, Foreign Affairs, Interior, and two other persons learned in law enforcement; and that the Taskforce shall be headed by the Minister of Labor, and Co-chaired by the Minister of Justice. Similarly, the Act also establishes the specific functions of the Taskforce, mandating it to “carry out the following activities either directly or via one or more of its constituent ministries as appropriate”:

(1) Develop the National Action Plan for the Prevention of Trafficking in persons;

(2) Coordinate the implementation of the Plan;

TIP ACTIONS TEMPLATE MATRIX

PREVENTION			
Action	Timeline	Responsible Parties	Performance Indicator
Objective 1.1: To build and strengthen anti-TIP institutions, and deal with TIP root causes			
Conduct continued research/study through community-based consultative dialogues to comprehensively identify additional key causes of human trafficking in Liberia		National Taskforce	Research/survey report with additional key causes of human trafficking identified
Develop programs to address the root causes of human trafficking		National Taskforce	Number of programs developed and implemented
Establish TIP data management system		National Taskforce (BIN/LNP/MoHSW/MoDG)	TIP data available secured through an established and functioning data management system
Provide competent training to Liberia's anti- Human Trafficking Task Force and other sections of ministries and agencies responsible for TIP matters		National Taskforce	Human Trafficking Task Force has received up-to date and competent training on combatting human trafficking.
Establish and operationalize a special Anti-Human Trafficking Unit (AHTU) within the Liberia National Police (LNP)		National Taskforce (LNP)	Special Anti-Human Trafficking Unit within LNP established
Develop training programs for combating human trafficking		National Taskforce (MoJ, MoL, LNP, BIN, etc.)	Anti-Human Trafficking training programs developed and being implemented
Incorporate TIP syllables into line institutions (LNP, BIN, etc.) training curriculum		National Taskforces (MoJ, LNP, BIN, etc.)	TIP syllables inserted into the training curriculum of human trafficking security institutions
Conduct basic, specialized and professional training for law enforcement, prosecution, and relevant government personnel, including defense forces in TIP prevention and protection, prosecution, etc.		National Taskforce, UNMIL, IOM, and other partners	Special and professional training for law enforcement and relevant GoL personnel conducted

- *Objective 3.2: Establish mechanism to obtain temporary residence documents for suspected victims(including children) of human trafficking to support related investigation and/or prosecution;*
- *Objective 3.3: Ensure free access to legal aid and redress, information on all relevant proceedings, and due compensation for suspected victims;*
- *Objective 3.4: Enhance identification procedures, and repatriation of potential/suspected victim(s) including women and children;*
- *Objective 3.5: Encourage reporting of TIP offenses and ensure protection for reporters, witnesses, and vulnerable associates of potential suspected victims;*
- *Objective 3.6: Establish and implement mechanism to enable institutional co-operation in the search and protection for missing children;*

PARTNERSHIP

Partnerships with other institutions and countries:

The Government of Liberia will fully cooperate with international institutions and countries in addressing cases of human trafficking. This would require the sharing of information, or executing arrest, mutual legal assistance and the conduct of possible extradition. Others shall include the seeking of advisory services, opportunities for specialized training and fund raising to complement local efforts.

I. Partnership program objectives:

The Government of Liberia will pursue the following objectives under the Partnership Program component of the Action Plan:

- *Objective 4.1: To enable interagency information exchange and foster domestic, bilateral and multilateral collaboration;*
- *Objective 4.2: To explore international assistance for advanced training and financial support;*

(3) Coordinate the collection and sharing of trafficking data among government agencies. All data collected shall respect the privacy of victims of trafficking;

(4) Coordinate the sharing of information between agencies for the purpose of: determining whether individuals crossing or attempting to cross our borders are perpetrators or victims of trafficking in persons, and detecting criminal groups engaged in trafficking;

(5) Identify and engage in efforts to facilitate cooperation with foreign countries, particularly those that constitute a significant source of victims, transit location, or destination of victims. This cooperation shall aim to strengthen bilateral, multilateral, local, and regional capacities to assist trafficking victims, prevent trafficking, prosecute traffickers, and assist in the appropriate reintegration of victims of trafficking.

(6) Establish policies to enable government to work with non-governmental organizations and other elements of civil society to prevent trafficking and provide assistance to victims.

A) The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPS) of the Taskforce

The Taskforce has established an SOP for Assistance to Victims. The SOP outlines the basic principles and guidelines in the provision of assistance to victims, and clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the Taskforce Secretariat, its Members, and Associate Members.

B) The Secretariat of the National Taskforce

The Secretariat is responsible for managing the administrative duties and daily program activities of the Taskforce. The Secretariat's functions are inclusive of the following:

- Coordinate and monitor, under the direction of the Taskforce, the implementation of the policies and guidelines promulgated by the Taskforce;
- Establish, maintain, and manage a central data-base on TIP;
- Provide secretarial service, including record-keeping and other such services of the Taskforce;
- Serve as the Focal Point in international law enforcement coordination (including INTERPOL);
- Research and study effective implementation of regional and international strategies to prevent and respond to TIP;
- Implement policies and programs in support of and consistent with the objectives of the Act;
- Enhance the capacity of its officers and personnel involved in trafficking matters through appropriate training and staff support programs;
- Undertake information gathering, conduct education and advocacy campaigns throughout the country on TIP;

- Study and document good practices so as to inform national policy formulation and program development.

1). In January, 2009, through direct presidential orders, a moratorium was placed on inter-country adoption of Liberia's children, followed by the establishment of the Presidential Ad Hoc Adoption Authority, chaired by the Ministry of Health. The Authority was charged, inter alia, to review all cases of adoption prior to the moratorium, with the view to improve inter-country adoption of minors. Only special cases of adoption, including those based on health-related (life-threatening) circumstances, were authorized.

In the meantime, as part of its child adoption reform measures, the MOHSW has submitted a proposed Child Adoption Act to the 53rd National Legislature; the Act essentially seeks to amend Sub chapter C on Adoption, of the Domestic Relations Law. The Act also further seeks to strengthen standards of investigations, court proceedings, and the licensing of agencies involved in adoption; it also requires potential adopters from abroad to reside in the country for at least 120 days, and ensures that parents understand the vital importance of their consent in adoption processes.

2) Similarly, by its determination to put in place relevant programs and policies to address critical women and children issues, in 2009, Government adopted a National Gender Policy, and established the Children Act in 2011. The Gender Policy and the Children Act are being coordinated and implemented by the Ministry of Gender and Development in collaboration with other ministries and agencies of Government.

3) Child labor does not always equate to human trafficking; nevertheless, human trafficking does include elements of child labor abuse and exploitation. The creation of a comprehensive child labor law would help re-enforce the fight against all forms of child abuses and human trafficking. As a major step in this direction, the Government of Liberia has signed the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 182, which calls for member states to eliminate and prohibit worse forms of child labor, including trafficking, drugs and child protection. However, Liberia is yet to sign another major ILO Convention, which is the ILO Convention 138. Convention 138 works hand-in-hand with 182, and it, among other things, addresses minimum age for work. In fact, Liberia and Somalia are the countries that have yet to accede to the ILO Convention 138.

6) Afford Basic Human Rights

The Government of Liberia will ensure that perpetrators and accused persons are afforded their basic human rights. These rights shall include adequate legal representation, proper standard of care while in custody, speedy trial, etc.

Prosecution program broad objectives:

The Government of Liberia shall pursue the following objectives under the Prosecution Program component of the Action Plan:

- *Objective 2.1: Implement the legislation and effectively investigate allegations of TIP*
- *Objective 2.2: Provide required supports to suspected victims during criminal proceedings*

PROTECTION

The Protection and Assistance to victims:

Keeping victims of trafficking safe from reprisal during investigation and court trials is a fundamental program requirement. GOL will endeavor to provide safe homes in undisclosed locations, under the supervision of trained supervisors capable of providing counseling and other services. A website will be created under the direct supervision of the Taskforce Secretariat that will be dedicated to anti-trafficking awareness program. Additionally, Section 4 of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) of the National Taskforce provides elaborate provisions and operational guidelines for the protection and assistance to victims of trafficking, including temporary shelter, legal aid, food and clothing, medical, and psychological support. Others may include traveling and other immigration-related documents, as well as asylum protection. This is a specific program area in which Government is currently weak, and needs to pay special and adequate attention in the combat of trafficking in Liberia.

I. Protection Program objectives:

The Government of Liberia will pursue the following objectives under the Prosecution Program component of the Action Plan:

- *Objective 3.1: Provide needed protections to potential/suspected victims of human trafficking;*

PROSECUTION

The Government of Liberia shall endeavor to exercise all legal options to combat trafficking in persons. These options shall include all legal rights and remedies available under the laws of Liberia and all international treaties, conventions, and protocols in responding to all situations of human trafficking. The activities in compliance with the aforementioned duties and obligations shall specifically include:

1) The Prosecution of perpetrators:

The Government of Liberia will robustly and expeditiously prosecute all persons accused and/or charged with the commission of human trafficking. All legal resources available within the reach of Government will be immediately directed towards the prosecution of any person so accused.

2) Training and assignment of prosecutors:

The Government of Liberia will endeavor to regularly train prosecutors to specifically prosecute all trafficking cases. These prosecutors will undergo specialized training in the prosecution of human trafficking cases.

3) Creation of an office for human trafficking cases:

The Government of Liberia will assign and adequately support a specific office within the Ministry of Justice to expeditiously handle all human trafficking situations and cases. This office shall coordinate with other ministries, agencies and institutions in relation to human trafficking.

4) Establish a legal desk within LNP

The Government will ensure the establishment of a legal desk specifically within the Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) of the Liberia National Police (LNP) to guide and oversee as well as fast-track processes of investigations in cases of human trafficking and ensure the processes of evidence gathering are prudently and scrupulously done within the confines of the law. Efforts shall also be made to further strengthen the capacity of WACPS with more trained personnel and required office logistics.

5) Review of legal instruments on human trafficking:

The Government of Liberia will regularly review all national legal instruments addressing human trafficking; giving appropriate recommendations thereto.

4) The Government has also established a special Juvenile Court to exclusively deal with juvenile matters, along with Criminal Court “E” that is also responsible for dealing with all sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)-related offenses in the country.

Additionally, the Government has established a special department within the Ministry of Justice that is responsible for addressing and legally directing all SGBV matters. The SGBV Unit within the Ministry of Gender and Development in 2013 reported eight (8) rape cases to the MOJ-SGBV Unit for prosecution. The MoGD SGBV Unit has also adopted a National Action Plan that directs, coordinates and guides the fight against gender-based violence throughout the country.

The Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) of the Liberia National Police was established in 2005 and is primarily responsible to address all women and children-related issues within the LNP; its functions now includes the investigation of all TIP cases within the LNP;

6) In exerting its uncompromising stance against suspected human trafficking activities in the country, in July 2013, the President of Liberia dismissed a number of highly placed state security officials within both the Ministry of Justice and the Bureau of Immigration. The President's dismissals were based on suspected acts of complicity by those security personnel affected that led to a TIP suspect under investigation absconding the country.

7) In April 2013, the Government of Liberia, through the office of the Attorney General, issued a special “Statement of Commitment”, in reaffirming Government's position in the fight against human trafficking in Liberia.

SECTION 4: KEY AREAS OF THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

PART I: THE CHALLENGE

The process of addressing human trafficking in a compelling and efficient manner is challenging for any nation. This process, however, can be particularly daunting for post-conflict, developing nations such as Liberia. The necessary steps can be resource-intensive, require skilled human capital and a strong show of political will. Following is a list of presented challenges.

1. Insecure Border Security and Migration Structures

One of the problems central to the fight against trafficking in Liberia is weak border management and protection. Firstly, the lack of adequate technical knowledge about the crime by state security forces in general and border security in particular, is a challenge. As a mode of operation, this transnational organized crime thrives on deceptive and manipulative intrigues; its workings and manifestations, like other crimes, can only be effectively checked with trained skills.

The Bureau of Immigration and Nationalization (BIN), which provides the lead in border security management has stepped up the campaign against trafficking activities in the country in recent time; however, it remains clear that TIP perpetrators have successfully trafficked their victims in and out of the country through designated border points, including the main international airport (Roberts International Airport – RIA) with legitimate visas acquired through consulates abroad as well as the BIN internal Airport Visa scheme. Records further revealed that the perpetrators intend trafficking cases registered by BIN and the LNP between 2010 and 2013, including Lebanese, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Sierra Leonean nationals, were permanent residents of Liberia who used the country as both a transit and designation point for trafficking purposes. The cause of our border insecurity can be directly attributed to the weak and obsolete nature of the New Alien and Nationality Law of Liberia (established in 1956 and amended in 1974).

It needs urgent reform so as to strengthen the legal framework of the Bureau of Immigration.

Contributing further to the weakness of the immigration system are the vices of corruption which undermine security vigilance and loyalty.

- Government will ensure the review of its current child adoption policies and regulations specifically through the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, with the view to prevent these adoption and child care institutions from being used as conduits for the trafficking of persons.;

Government will ensure (through state security and other relevant agencies) the regular monitoring of suspicious environments, border communities, adoption homes and programs, transit points, hotels, motels, alluvial mining sites, plantations, air, sea and land borders etc. and/or all areas, institutions and communities that may be susceptible to trafficking.

- The Government of Liberia pledges to strengthen the monitoring and evaluation functions of the Secretariat of the Anti-Human Trafficking Task Force as it relates to this Action Plan and its various program activities. This would entail regular, integrated and coordinated assessment surveys, and regular reporting. Through this the Government will regularly determine challenges, progress, and improve performance. Training would also be required in this area.
- The Government will allocate the requisite financial resources for anti-human trafficking efforts; and because of the urgency with which the Government approaches efforts to combat TIP in Liberia, the Government pledges to integrate and incorporate the National Action Plan into the long term socio-economic and development agenda of the country – the AFT.

Prevention Program Broad Objectives:

The Government of Liberia shall pursue the following objectives under the Prevention Program of the Action Plan:

- Objective 1.1: To build and strengthen anti-TIP institutions, and address TIP root causes by providing training for law enforcement, support workers and other key Personnel;
- Objective 1.2: To raise national public awareness about all basic manifestations of human trafficking, including border security and all other state security institutions;
- Objective 1.3: To strengthen border management control systems and intelligence;
- Objective 1.4: To strengthen control and security of Liberia's birth and naturalization, travel, and other identity documents;
- Objective 1.5: To create a protective environment and reduce children vulnerability to trafficking and traffickers.

Part III The Plan: The Four P's

1. PREVENTION

Prevention of trafficking as a major intervention:

- The Government of Liberia believes that one of the most effective ways to combat and prevent TIP in the country is through a robust and sustained public awareness campaign. To this end, the Government of Liberia shall endeavor to ensure that all relevant ministries and agencies responsible for driving the National Action plan, including the Secretariat of the National Taskforce, regularly design appropriate public awareness program strategies in the fight against TIP. Such awareness strategies will target exposure of the forms TIP takes, dangers it entails, methods and intrigues of its workings, the acts, means, and broad motives of the crime.
- The awareness campaign will be community-driven, to include the use of all local languages and community radios for effective communication purposes.
- As part of its broad range of prevention mechanisms, Government will ensure that regular training opportunities are available at the LNP Training Academy. These will include special training for the BIN, LNP, the Transnational Crimes Unit (TCU) and other border security bodies, to specifically strengthen their intelligence and evidence gathering, investigative and report writing skills and techniques on tackling trafficking in particular and other transnational crimes in general. For example, all international conventions and treaties on Transnational Organized Crimes, including TIP, all domestic laws on TIP and other related ones will be incorporated into the curriculum of the Training Academy. Additionally, Government will endeavor to identify and mobilize support internationally for specialized training opportunities;
- Government will ensure that institutions that process and issue birth certificates, passports, visas, work permits, residence permits to facilitate internal and external travels and other related matters are sensitized to be on the watch forelements of trafficking.;

Human trafficking, like drugs and other transnational organized crimes, is a lucrative business that has the propensity to penetrate state security systems. To effectively fight the crime, not only must security forces be properly trained and effectively equipped, they must be reasonably paid to serve as a disincentive to falling prey to the manipulations and intrigues of traffickers.

Moreover, visa system both within our foreign missions as well as the BIN Airport Visa Scheme in country also need to be further strengthened and tightened.

The criminal intelligence network needs to be proactively on the watch for TIP perpetrators and other transnational criminals. These entail training and equipment.

2. The Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS/LNP)

The Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) of the LNP is tasked with addressing matters related to domestic violence, abandoned children, SGBV, juvenile, and human trafficking cases. The WACPS, however, is faced with its own internal problems. Despite the heavy workload that WACPS carries, it is grossly understaffed and needs more trained personnel (investigators and skilled report writers). The lack of trained personnel hampers expedient prosecution of human trafficking crimes. For instance, if LNP charge sheets, which form the basis for indictment and prosecution, are not well written with the charges correctly articulated this could compromise the prosecution of a case.

Training for the WAPCS is another unmet area. Since its first training in March 2013, the WAPCS has had no additional training. Within the same year, 9 trained investigators of the WACPS sought reassignment to other units of the LNP in search of better pay and incentives.

3. Ineffectiveness of the Anti-Human Trafficking National Taskforce.

The Taskforce lacks an effective enforcement mechanism. As an inter-agency structure, the Taskforce has a statutory mandate to serve as the principal vehicle for leading, managing, directing, coordinating, monitoring, and undertaking all program activities against human trafficking in Liberia. Since its establishment in 2005, the Secretariat of the Taskforce has been located in a one room office within the Ministry of Labor and is run by a coordinator and his deputy.

Another major challenge that plagues the Taskforce is the lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities assigned to taskforce members, backed by special budgetary support.

As a result of these structural and administrative challenges, generally, GoL's programs in the fight against TIP have been more reactive than proactive, less organized than the other way around.

4. Lack of Public Awareness about Human Trafficking.

In order for the fight against human trafficking in the country to be effective, that fight must be joined by the public at large. It is not sufficient to have fine laws on the books, but strong anti-TIP security and intelligence networks, re-enforced by an enlightened public is a major way to address the problem. The lack of public awareness about the TIP is manifested in the various security sectors as well. As a result of this specific challenge, trafficking perpetrators successfully thrive on the ignorance of the public at large, and effectively manipulate security institutions and other vital organs of Government. Traffickers are able to legitimize fraudulent activities, as in the cases of acquiring visas, and other immigration documents, including passports and birth certificates.

Against this background, the Secretariat of the Anti-Human Trafficking Taskforce will draw up a well-thought-out public awareness strategy as part of the national campaign against TIP. The strategy will include community-based, top-to-bottom, and an all-inclusive approach in waging a robust campaign against the crime, including exposing all forms, manifestations, intrigues and workings of the criminal enterprise.

5. Appropriate Services for Victims

The lack of organized programs directed at victim-assistance, particularly special shelters set aside purposefully for TIP victims, remains a major challenge. Psycho-social counseling and other forms of medical care are also vital and lacking. Care for victims would also require interpreters where language barriers become a problem of communication as experience has shown. The taskforce intends to vigorously address these shortcomings.

6. Budgetary Support

Above all, the lack of appropriate and regular budgetary support to all TIP programs within relevant GoL ministries and agencies is making them not functional. That is why this plan provides for its incorporation into the current five year national development plan of Government, the Agenda for Transformation (AfT).

PART II THE VISION

1. Guiding Principles

The Guiding principles for directing the fight against TIP in Liberia, particularly women and children, shall be to from:

- Uphold the human rights of trafficked persons and provide appropriate care for them;
- Study and seriously address the underlying root causes of vulnerability, particularly of women and children, including poverty and negative traditional cultural practices;
- Provide significant financial, structural and social support to programs that protect and empower women and girls;
- Adopt a community-based approach in the fight against trafficking; including addressing such issues as mass poverty, broad human security needs, education, health, and food insecurity.
- Aggressively prosecute perpetrators of human trafficking.
- Provide rigorous training and continuing education on identifying and addressing human trafficking to law enforcement personnel and prosecuting attorneys.

2. Objectives of the National Action Plan

The National Action Plan against human trafficking in Liberia has a set of objectives that include the following:

1. To establish an all-inclusive, coordinated, integrated and sustained framework in the fight against human trafficking in Liberia;
2. To establish a set of program activities with timelines and expected outcomes which are located in the program matrix ;
3. To identify and establish appropriate and regular fiscal budgetary supports to the program;
4. To fulfill and respond to a fundamental international requirement in the fight against human trafficking, which is what this plan seeks to achieve; and
5. To aggressively address all threats posed by human trafficking against Liberia's broad national Security interest.