



***RESEARCH ON  
PREVALENCE AND ATTITUDES TO RAPE IN LIBERIA  
SEPTEMBER TO OCTOBER 2008***

**UNMIL LEGAL AND JUDICIAL SYSTEM SUPPORT DIVISION  
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## Table of Contents

List of Acronyms	4
List of Tables and Figures	5
Executive Summary	6
1. Introduction	9
2. Review of Literature	11
3. Methodology	14
4. Characteristics of Respondents	20
5. Findings	24
5.1 Prevalence of Rape in Liberia	24
5.2 Characteristics of Victims	27
5.3 Characteristics of Perpetrators	28
5.4 Reporting Rape	31
5.4.1 Challenges to Rape Reporting	33
5.5 Challenges to Rape Investigation and Prosecution	39
5.6 Youth and Societal Attitudes to Rape	43
5.6.1 Social Attitudes to Rape	44
5.6.2 Understandings of the notion of rape	54
5.7 Other Social Conditions Contributing to Rape in Liberia	60
5.8 Knowledge of the Rape Amendment Law	62
6. Recommendations	63
7. Bibliography	66
8. Appendices	69

## List of Acronyms

AFELL	Association of Liberian Female Lawyers
FIND	Foundation for International Dignity
JPC	Justice and Peace Commission
LDHS	Liberian Demographic and Health Survey
LISGIS	Liberian Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services.
LNP	Liberia National Police
MOJ	Ministry of Justice
PAE	Pacific Atlantic Engineering
SGBV	Sexual Gender Based Violence
THINK	Touching Humanity in Need of Kindness
UN	United Nations
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
WHO	World Health Organization
WACPS	Women and Children Protection Section

## List Tables and Figures

Figure 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents by Religion

Figure 3: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Attainment

Figure 4: Distribution of Respondents by Marital Status

Figure 5: Prevalence of Rape by County

Figure 6: Age Profile of Victims

Table 1: Distribution of Households by County

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Sex

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Ethnicity

Table 4: Rape Prevalence by County

Table 5: Police Statistics showing the Age Distribution of Perpetrators

Table 6: Rural/Urban Distribution of Known Survivors Who Reported to the Police

Table 7: Attitudes to Rape

Table 8: Attitude to Forced Sex by Religion

## Executive Summary

This is a report of a survey on rape carried from September to October 2008 in all the 15 counties of Liberia. The survey was commissioned by UNMIL in association with the Ministry of Gender and Development to provide an in-depth explanation on the culture of rape in Liberia. The specific objectives of the research were to assess the prevalence of rape in Liberia, attitudes, victim and perpetrator profiles, reporting rates and challenges and make recommendations for addressing the problem. The main findings of the survey were as follows:

- About one out of every 5 (22%) respondents knew someone who had been raped. Respondents were more willing to discuss survivors they knew than their personal experiences. About 2% of the respondents reported having been raped. More rape incidents were found in urban areas than in rural areas. Grand Gedeh and Sinoe reported the highest number of respondents who had been raped. The lowest percentage of survivors was found in Maryland and Nimba.
- Lofa County recorded the highest number of respondents (48%) who personally knew someone who had been raped followed by Grand Kru where 45% of the respondents reported knowing a survivor. About a third of the respondents from Rivercess and Sinoe knew someone who had been raped. About a fifth of the respondents from Montserrado, Nimba, Grand Bassa and Gbarpolu also reported knowing someone who had been raped. Lower proportions of respondents who knew a survivor were found in Bomi, Bong, Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh and Margibi.
- The research found that rape is a crime committed primarily against the young people. The victims are predominantly young women between the ages of 10 and 19 years.
- The perpetrators of rape were mostly young adults and middle-aged men. About 41% were between 20 and 39 years old. The majority were also known to the victims.
- Of the respondents who had experienced rape, 65% victims told someone about it. Parents and friends were the most likely people to be informed. Only 12.5% of the incidents were reported to the police. The research also found that rape is more likely to be reported in urban than in rural areas. Further, reporting of rape is linked to age. Victims who are below 19 years old are more likely to report than those 20 years old and above. Challenges to rape reporting in Liberia include stigmatization, shame, fear of retaliation from perpetrator, fear of not being believed, perceived police corruption, familiarity with the perpetrator, fear of rejection by a partner and fear of parents or guardians. Problems within the criminal justice system also discourage victims from reporting rape.
- Respondents exhibited some rape supporting attitudes. An overwhelming percentage of respondents (83%) felt that women contribute to their victimization, particularly by the way they dress. Participants' understanding of rape was also found to be contextual. A significant

number of respondents (44%) expressed the view that rape could not be committed in marriage and other intimate relationships. Those who believed that rape could not be committed within marriage based their opinion largely on traditional and religious understandings of marriage and dating relationships. Respondents from Lofa County were more likely to find forced sex acceptable, likewise, people who practiced traditional religion.

- Poverty, the war and unemployment were identified by respondents as causative factors to rape in Liberia.

### **Major Recommendations**

- To encourage reporting and increased recourse to the legal process, the SGBV Unit within the Ministry of Justice should be expanded and given the necessary support and assistance to train and employ qualified staff to perform the relevant duties.
- The government should dialogue with traditional authorities on ways of reforming customary laws to protect women and children.
- To ensure ownership and the sustainability of rape awareness programmes, traditional authorities should be integrated into the national prevention efforts.
- The police and the judiciary must be adequately funded to be able to perform their functions effectively.
- The police should be given continuous training on evidence gathering and women and children protection.
- The judiciary must ensure that all rape trials are held in camera as required by the Rape Amendment Act. Further, prosecutors and judges must be trained on rape prosecution particularly on the use of witness protection measures to minimize trauma.
- Rape awareness programmes should be intensified throughout the country. Public education should also focus on attitude change, particularly the promotion of gender sensitive images in the public, media and schools.
- Given the high prevalence of rape among children, an in-depth study focusing on the causes of child rape should be done.
- All efforts on rape must be coordinated to ensure consistency in the messages given out to the public. There must be a standard procedure for rape awareness.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background to the Research

The 14 year civil war in Liberia was characterized by widespread sexual violence by the armed factions. Women and girls were forced into sexual slavery and routinely subjected to acts of sexual violence notably gang rape. After the war, sweeping changes were made to the law on rape as is evident by the Rape Amendment Act, taking into account new forms of sexual assaults committed during the war. The law came into force in 2006. By this law, the definition of rape has been widened to include penetration of a person's genital region by any foreign object. The age of consent for sexual intercourse has also been increased to 18 years while the offence of gang rape, introduced by this Act, carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment. A unit known as the Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) has also been established within the police service to handle issues relating to women and children who may become victims of rape. Personnel manning this unit have been given specialized training to be able to respond effectively to rape cases.

Regrettably, rape continues to be a major challenge to reconstruction efforts in Liberia. The criminal justice system, having endured years of war, is considerably weak and struggles to cope with the magnitude of criminal cases. The reporting and prosecution rates for rape are lower than expected with cases being compromised by family members or abandoned altogether. Therefore, in furtherance of its mandate to rehabilitate the justice sector, the Legal and Judicial Systems Support Division (LJSSD) of the UN Mission in Liberia in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and Development commissioned this report to gain a better understanding of rape in Liberia to guide their intervention strategies.

### 1.2 Objectives of the Research

The specific objectives of the survey are to:

1. Determine the prevalence of rape in all 15 counties of Liberia;
2. Identify youth and societal attitudes and behavioral patterns to rape in Liberia;
3. Identify victim and offender profiles;
4. Assess reporting rates and challenges to rape reporting; and
5. Make recommendations for addressing rape issues in Liberia.

### 1.3 Definitions

- a. Rape was defined as penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth with the penis without person's consent or penetration of the vagina or anus with a body part or foreign

- object without a person's consent.
- b. Youth was defined as persons between the ages of 15 and 24 in accordance with the UN's definition adopted in 1985 during the International Youth Year.
  - c. "During the war" was defined as the period between 1989 and 2003.
  - d. Minor was defined as a person under the age of 18.

#### **1.4 The Population**

Liberia is in West Africa and bordered by the Ivory Coast, Guinea and Sierra Leone. It is a member of the Mano River Union which includes Sierra Leone and Guinea. It covers an area of approximately 111,369 sq. km. It is divided into 15 counties namely, Montserrado, Nimba, Bong, Lofa, Grand Bassa, Margibi, Maryland, Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, Bomi, Gbarpolu, Rivergee, Rivercess and Grand Kru. The capital Monrovia is in Montserrado County. Some of the principal towns are Monrovia, Buchanan (Grand Bassa), Ganta (Nimba), Gbarnga (Bong) and Kakata (Margibi).

Compared to countries in the sub-region, the population size of Liberia is relatively small. The National Population and Housing Census estimates the current population of Liberia to be 3,489,072 with an annual growth rate of about 2%. Montserrado, Nimba, Bong, Lofa, Grand Bassa and Margibi counties account for 75.2% of the population. Montserrado, Nimba and Bong hold 56% of the population. The least populations are found in Grand Kru, Rivercess, River Gee, Bomi and Gbarpolu counties. These counties account for only 10% of the total population. The population is almost evenly distributed between males and females. There are 1,764,555 males and 1,724,517 females. About a third of the population is found in Montserrado County alone. Monrovia, with a population of 1,010,970, accounts for 88% of the population in Montserrado County, and about 28% of the total population.

The 2007 LDHS found a larger proportion of the population concentrated in the younger age groups indicating a high dependency ratio. Forty seven percent of the population was below 15 years, 49% in the 15 – 64 age group and 3% are above 65.

There are about 16 ethnic groups in Liberia. The Kpelle are the largest ethnic group. The majority of the population is Christian but there are a significant number of Muslims and people who practice traditional religion.

## **2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Post war studies on rape in Liberia indicate a high prevalence rate for rape due largely to the 14 year civil war. A WHO study in 2004 in Montserrado and Bong counties found that 77.4% of women were raped during the conflict. In 2005, a similar study in Lofa, Nimba, Grand Gedeh and Grand Bassa counties estimated that 72.1% of the women had been raped during the war. Another WHO study in 2006 in four counties in Liberia found that 61.4% of the respondents had been raped during the war. The 2007 LDHS, which sampled more than 7,000 households and over 30,000 persons, estimates that 18% of women between the ages of 15 – 49 have experienced some form of sexual violence. Although the prevalence of rape during the war was undoubtedly high, the high prevalence rate found by the WHO studies may have been due partly to the sites selected, which included IDP camps as well as the researcher's use of snowball sampling.

Rape is known to be an underestimated crime given the culture of silence that surrounds issues of sexuality. Statistics on rape are therefore considered as not truly reflecting the scale of the offence. Barriers to reporting rape have been found to include fear of not being believed, lack of physical access to police, fear of retaliation by the perpetrator, fear of legal processes including rudeness and poor treatment by police (Jewkes, 2002). Also, victims do not report because of the fear that nothing can or will be done about it (Ward et al., 1991); to protect the perpetrator (Williams 1984); embarrassment or shame (Amir, 1971); lack of confidence in the legal system (McDermott 1979); fear of blame by family, friends and police (Weiss & Borges 1973) and the fear of rejection by husbands and family (Amir 1971). It has been suggested that for a victim to feel comfortable to report she must first see herself as a victim and be confident that others would do same (Williams, 1984). Therefore, the more familiar the perpetrator is to the victim, the less the likelihood that the rape will be reported (Muganziyi et al., 2004; Williams 1984). Women who are raped by strangers (referred to as classic or traditional rape) are, therefore, more likely to report because they see themselves as victims.

The WHO (2005) global report on sexual violence found that risk factors to rape operate at the individual, partner and society levels. Individual factors include a woman's level of education, financial autonomy, level of empowerment and social support. Women who are dependent on their partners are more likely to be sexually assaulted. The partner factors include a partner's level of communication, use of alcohol or drugs, employment status and

experience with violence and aggression as a child. Factors related to the immediate social context include the degree of economic inequality between men and women and attitudes towards gender roles.

Rape as a product of unequal gender relations finds support in feminist jurisprudence. Jewkes (2002) suggests that rape in South Africa is caused by the gender power inequalities in the society and is both an “expression of male dominance and an assertion of that position”. In patriarchal societies, sex is considered to be a male entitlement, which is reinforced by social institutions such as customary marriage and dating relationships (Jewkes, 2002). As Adjetey (1995:1360) notes “.....in some parts of Africa, marriage results in a woman’s physical person and her sexuality becoming part of her husband’s property. In other parts of Africa, even though customary law did not, in theory, incorporate the very existence of a woman into that of a man’s property upon marriage, in practice women were treated as though this were the case. (...) It is a general rule all over Africa that a man can never be said to rape his own wife. As such, forced sex within marriage does not constitute an offense under customary or statutory law”.

The perpetration of rape has also been linked to beliefs or myths that condone it (Burt, 1980). Rape myths are attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but which are widely and persistently held, serving to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994:134). For instance, the perception that victims often encourage their victimization is a common myth that is used to legitimize rape. This perception influences people’s attitudes to victims because the more a person is seen as having precipitated the rape, the less likely it is that something will be done about it.

Traditional sex role stereotyping contributes to the acceptance of these myths (Orcutt & Faison, 1988). Expectations pertaining to the behavior of men and women in sexual encounters, such as men being the initiators and aggressors in sexual encounters, may be used in justifying forced sex. Thus, people who believe in traditional sex role stereotypes are less likely to label forced sex as rape (Burt & Albin 1981). .

Significant differences have been found in attitudes of men and women to rape (Tieger, 1981; Szymanski et al., 1993). Men have also been found to view rape as a less serious crime than women (Tieger, 1981; Szymanski et al., 1993). They are also reported to be more likely to attribute more responsibility to the victim than women will (Cowan & Campbell 1995; Grubb

& Harrower 2008). Attribution of blame for rape to the victim has been found even in the Criminal Justice System (Borgida & White 1978). Stereotypical attitudes about rape influence its investigation and prosecution as well as the conviction rate (Temkin 2008). Since rape is considered to be a crime committed by strangers often resulting in physical injury, victims who do not conform to this rape stereotype are less likely to have their cases prosecuted (Martin & Powell 1994).

Poverty increases a woman's vulnerability to rape (Armstrong 1994; Jewkes 2002). Poverty creates a situation of dependency for women making them more susceptible to sexual violence and exploitation.

Corruption has been found to be a major challenge to rape investigation and prosecution in some parts of Africa (Jewkes, 2002). Corruption takes the form of payment to police, prosecutors and court officials for the destruction of dockets; the completion of investigations and the facilitation of private settlement (Jewkes, 2002).

The victims of rape are mostly women while the perpetrators are typically men. Of the number of persons found to have been raped in the 1999 LDHS, 3.5% were found to be men while 96.5% were women. Although not much attention seems to be devoted to the rape of men, given the lower prevalence rate, the effect of rape of men has been found to be equally traumatic (Smith et al., 1988). Women at risk of rape are usually young and unmarried. In Liberia, the 1999 LDHS found that most of the victims of rape fell within the ages of 10 and 14. However, the 2007 LDHS suggests that women most likely to experience sexual violence are those between the ages of 25 and 39. The perpetrators were found to be older men usually in their mid – 30s or 40s. Studies have also shown that the majority of the perpetrators of rape are known to victims. Findings of the 2007 LDHS reveal that sexual violence perpetrated by intimate partners is more common than sexual violence perpetrated by non – intimate partners. Thirty two percent of the women reported that they had been abused by their current husband or partner; 10% were abused by a current or former boyfriend; 8% were abused by the police or soldiers; 5% by former husbands or partners; 5% by friends and acquaintances; 4% by family friends and 4% by strangers.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 The Sample

The study involved 1000 households in the 15 counties of Liberia. The households were proportionally allocated to the various counties on the basis of population size, which was determined in accordance with the preliminary results of the 2008 National Population and Housing Census in Liberia. About 75% of the households were allocated to the six counties with the largest population distribution namely Montserrado (32.8%), Nimba (13.4%), Bong (9.4%), Lofa (7.8%), Grand Bassa (6.5%) and Margibi (5.7%) counties. The remaining 25% was proportionally allocated to the remaining nine counties. In each household, three people were selected for the survey.

**Table 1: Distribution of households by County**

<b>County</b>	<b>% of total Population</b>	<b>No. of households allocated</b>
Bomi	2.4	24
Bong	9.4	94
Gbarpolu	2.4	24
Grand Bassa	6.5	65
Cape Mount	3.7	37
Grand Gedeh	3.6	36
Grand Kru	1.6	16
Lofa	7.8	78
Margibi	5.7	57
Maryland	3.9	39
Montserrado	32.8	328
Nimba	13.4	134
Rivercess	1.9	19
Rivergee	1.9	19
Sinoe	3	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1000</b>

Source: Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo – Information Services (LISGIS), 2008 National Population and Housing Census: Preliminary Results

Enumeration areas (EAs) were selected in both urban and rural areas from a list of areas enumerated in the 2008 population census by LISGIS. EAs in urban areas were selected by random sampling. Within the counties, 20% of the households were allocated to rural areas while 80% were allocated to urban areas. In making this distribution, the consultants assumed a higher prevalence rate of rape in urban than in rural areas based on the studies already conducted (1999 LDHS). Accessibility was also a major factor. Movement in rural areas was more difficult due to the road conditions and the fact that settlements are more dispersed. Only rural communities that were accessible were selected.

### **3.2 The Study Participants**

A total number of 2952 persons were interviewed in the survey; 37.3% were male while 62.7% were female. Participants included male and female aged 10 years old and above who were willing to participate in the survey. In each household, 3 persons were randomly selected for the survey. The participants fell into 3 categories; one male aged 18 years old and above, one female aged 18 years old and above and a female or male between 10 and 17 years old. Persons in each category were selected at random. If any of the persons selected was unwilling to participate, he/she was substituted with another person within the same age group. If no one within the age group was available or willing to participate any other person within any age group who was willing to participate was interviewed.

### **3.3 Data Collection**

The collection of data was done by the use of questionnaires, key informant interviews and focus group discussions. Police statistics on rape were also analyzed.

### **The Questionnaires**

The questionnaires covered four major sections namely, (a) attitudes to rape; (b) personal experience with rape; (c) reporting rape and (d) prosecution of rape. To assess attitudes, participants were asked to state whether they agreed, disagreed or were undecided about certain statements. Four major factors were tested namely; (i) the extent of victim blame (ii) personal understanding or definition of rape (iii) perception of the seriousness of rape and (iv) the perception of the rape victim. These tests were used because they have a direct bearing on the labeling, reporting and prosecution of rape. For instance, a high level of victim blame leads to a trivialization or denial of the crime. Further, personal blame for rape is often a reflection of larger societal blame and, therefore, victims who blame themselves are unlikely to report.

Due to the sensitive nature of rape, the culture of silence surrounding it, it was anticipated that respondents would feel more comfortable discussing other people's experiences of rape than their own. Therefore, in determining the rate of prevalence, we used two measures; a measure of respondents' own experiences of rape which we expected to be low and a measure of their knowledge of other people's experiences of rape which we expected to be much higher. Both men and women were sampled for rape prevalence in line with the legal definition of rape. To minimize trauma, particulars of the rape attack were limited to the most recent rape. The purpose of the research was explained to all participants and anonymity and confidentiality of the information provided assured.

### **Key Informant interviews**

Key informant interviews were held with the police, circuit court and magisterial judges and county attorneys in some counties to ascertain the challenges faced in rape investigation and prosecution. In all, nine interviews were conducted with the police, 8 with county attorneys and 9 with judges. Those who were not interviewed either declined the interview or were unavailable. The police interviews were conducted with police from the Women and Children Protection Unit in the various counties. A structured interview guide was used for the interviews.

### **Focus Group Discussions**

Focus group discussions were organized for students and community members in Montserrado, Lofa, Maryland, Nimba, Grand Bassa and Bong counties to obtain detailed information on community attitudes to rape. Since the researchers could not hold focus group discussions in all the counties due to time constraints, the largest counties were selected. Montserrado, Nimba, Bong, Lofa and Grand Bassa are the counties with the highest populations and presumably the most diverse. Maryland was selected to capture views from the South East.

A total of 27 focus group discussions were held. Four focus group discussions were held in Bong, Lofa, Nimba, Grand Bassa and Maryland. Seven focus group discussions were held in Montserrado. The focus group discussions involved high school students and community members. The students were between the ages of 15 and 25 years. The community members were mostly middle aged men and women. Separate focus group discussions were held for

male and female participants. The number of participants in the discussions ranged from 10 to 15. A semi - structured interview guide was used in the focus group discussions and the interviews lasted for about an hour. The discussions were conducted under conducive conditions and at times and locations that were convenient to the participants.

### **Documents**

Existing records on rape were obtained from the police to establish offender and victim profiles for reported cases. The researchers could not obtain records from the individual counties since they were not readily available. However, national records on rape were obtained from the headquarters of the WACPS in Monrovia. Records obtained from the police were statistics from January to September 2008.

### **3.4 Training**

The consultants organized a day's training for interviewers prior to the fieldwork. The purpose of the training was to get the interviewers acquainted with the research tools. The interviewers were provided by two NGOs, the Justice for Peace Commission (JPC) and Foundation for International Dignity (FIND). The training focused on the questionnaire and the administration of the questionnaire. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, issues of confidentiality and anonymity were discussed. Interviewers were made to understand the need for privacy when administering the questionnaires. They were to ensure at all times that they were alone with the participants. All the questions in the questionnaire were examined in the training after which a practice session involving the interviewers was organized. After the training, the interviewers were sent in pairs to communities in Montserrado for practice interviews. A total of 25 interviewers were trained for the survey. With the exception of two interviewers, all the interviewers had some experience conducting surveys. The first time interviewers were paired with experienced interviewers in the first week of interviews to enable them gain confidence and experience.

### **3.5 Field Work**

Data collection started on 20<sup>th</sup> September and ended on 27<sup>th</sup> October 2008. The data collection was done simultaneously within the counties. The average length on the interviews was 25 minutes. Most of the interviews were conducted in English. The local languages were used mostly in the rural communities. The data was cleaned at the end of each day to ensure quality.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

Data from the questionnaires was cleaned by a team of experienced data entry persons and then processed using the CS-Pro software. The qualitative data was analyzed using various themes and codes developed based on a content analysis of the material collected. In writing the report, the survey findings and police records were triangulated with the key informant interviews and focus group discussions as necessary.

### **3.7 Field Challenges**

1. Bad weather and road conditions made it difficult to conduct interviews particularly in rural communities.
2. Since the survey started during the Ramadan, the survey of Muslim households had to be suspended till after the Ramadan. Some Muslim respondents informed the interviewers that they are not expected to discuss issues on sex during the period of purification. Some of them participated in the survey after the Ramadan while others refused to do so because it was against their religious beliefs. The postponement caused some delay in data collection in Lofa County.
3. In rural communities, most of the participants could only be interviewed in the early mornings and evenings due to farming activities during the day. Isolating women for the interview was a major challenge since neighbours sometimes became suspicious. Some interviews had to be terminated for lack of privacy.
4. Despite assurances from researchers that the survey was purely for research purposes, some participants refused to disclose information on their own personal experience with rape or incidents they knew about for fear that the alleged perpetrators would be punished.

### **3.8 Limitations of Study**

- a. Although Liberia is more rural than urban, only 20% of the rural population was surveyed. This limits the extent to which the data can be generalized to rural areas of Liberia.

## 4 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

### 4.1 Sex of Respondents

The table below shows the sex distribution of respondents. A total of 2,952 persons were participated in the survey. About a third of the respondents were male while two-thirds were female.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by sex and county**

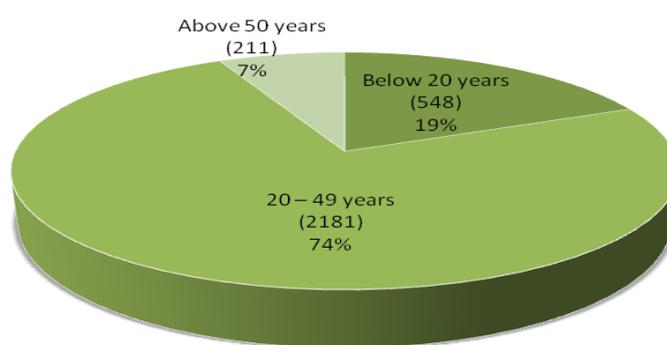
County	Number	Men %	Women %
Bomi	109	2	98
Bong	294	31	69
Gbarpolu	77	26	74
Grand Bassa	195	48	52
Grand Cape Mount	108	40	60
Grand Gedeh	90	39	61
Grand Kru	49	47	53
Lofa	262	43	57
Margibi	175	22	78
Maryland	111	34	66
Montserrado	888	43	57
Nimba	392	39	61
Rivercess	54	46	54
Rivergee	57	48	51
Sinoe	91	38	62
<b>Total</b>	<b>2952</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>62</b>

Source: Fieldwork 2008

### 4.2 Age of Respondents

As shown in Figure 1 below, three-quarters of the respondents (74%) were between 20 and 49 years old. About 18% of the respondents were below 19 years old. Of this 5% were between 10 and 14 years old. About 7% were 50 years and above. There is very little variation at the county level. However, in Cape Mount, no person aged 50 years and above was interviewed.

**Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by Age**



### 4.3 Ethnicity

Table 3 shows that most of the respondents were Kpelle (20%). Other ethnic groups that are highly represented are the Bassa (16%), Kru (10%), Grebo (9%), Lorma (8%) and Mano (7.5%). About 1% of respondents were Congo by tribe with only one person being Gbie.

**Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Ethnicity**

Ethnicity	Frequency	%
Bassa	467	16
Kpelle	586	20
Gio	140	5
Krahn	105	3.6
Vai	129	4.4
Kissi	92	3.
Lorma	241	8.2
Gbande	84	2.8
Kru	297	10
Gbie	1*	
Gola	111	3.8
Grebo	259	8.8
Mano	221	7.5
Mende	34	1.2
Congo	23	1
Mandingo	162	5.5

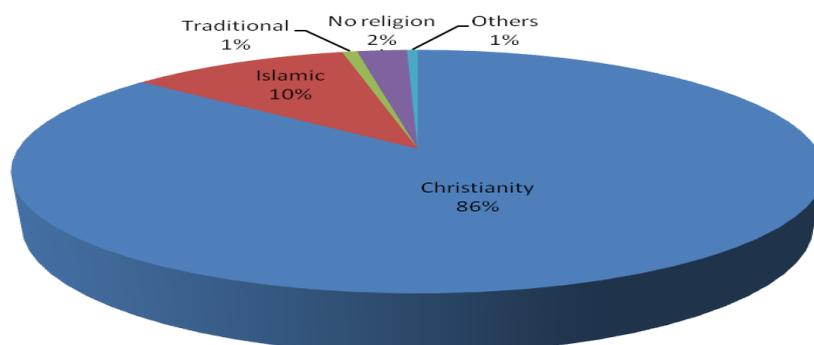
Source: Fieldwork 2008

### 4.4 Religion

The respondents were predominantly Christian: 86% were Christian, 11% were Muslim, 1% practised traditional religion while 2% had no religion. Although the number of Muslims is low overall, some counties recorded significantly high numbers. In Bomi, 38% of respondents were Muslim while the same is true for 40% of the sample in Cape Mount and

37% in Grand Kru.

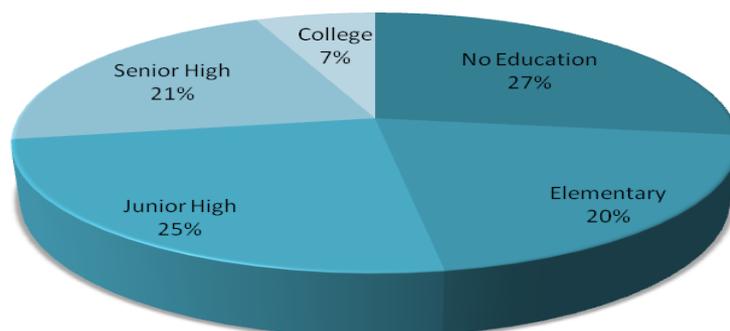
**Figure 2: Distribution of Respondents by Religion**



#### 4.5 Level of Educational Attainment

Figure 3 shows the level of education of respondents. A quarter of the respondents (27%) had no education, 20% had attained elementary education, 25% had attained Junior High School education, 21% had attained Senior High School education and 6.4% had attained college education. Montserrado had the highest proportion of college graduates (14%) followed by Grand Bassa (7%). Over half of the respondents from Bomi and Gbarpolu (61%) had no education. The level of educational attainment testifies to the impact the civil war had in terms of truncating the educational aspirations of the Liberian citizens.

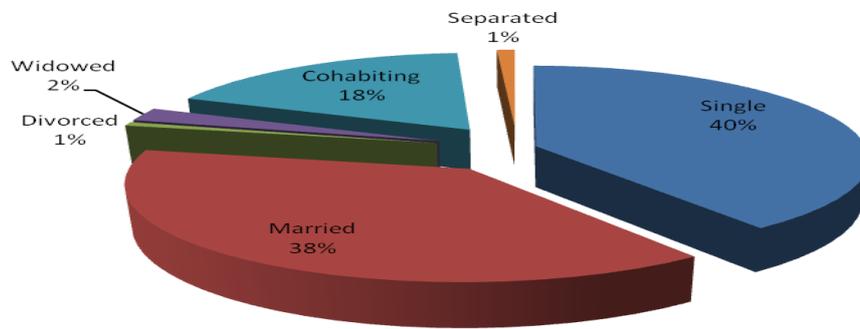
**Figure 3: Distribution of Respondents by educational attainment**



#### 4.6 Marital Status

The majority of respondents are single. As shown in Figure 4, about a third of the respondents are married while 18.8% are cohabiting. Therefore, about 57% of respondents were either married or cohabiting.

**Figure 4: Distribution of Respondents by marital status**



## 5 FINDINGS

### 5.1 Prevalence of Rape in Liberia

As already noted, the prevalence of rape was assessed first, on the basis of the personal experiences of respondents and, secondly, with reference to the number of known incidents. As expected, more known cases of rape were reported than personal experiences with rape. Also, some parents whose children had been raped chose to speak on behalf of the children and did not allow personal interviews with them. Finally, it appeared in some of the interviews that the respondents were actually talking about themselves giving the level of detail they provided.

As shown in Table 4, 1.7% of the total sample reported having been raped. Sinoe and Grand Gedeh recorded the highest proportion of rape incidents, accounting for 3.2% and 3.3% respectively. Of the number who had been raped, 16.3% reported having been raped more than once while 10.2% said they had been raped by the same person more than once. Six of the respondents (14.5%) had experienced gang rape.

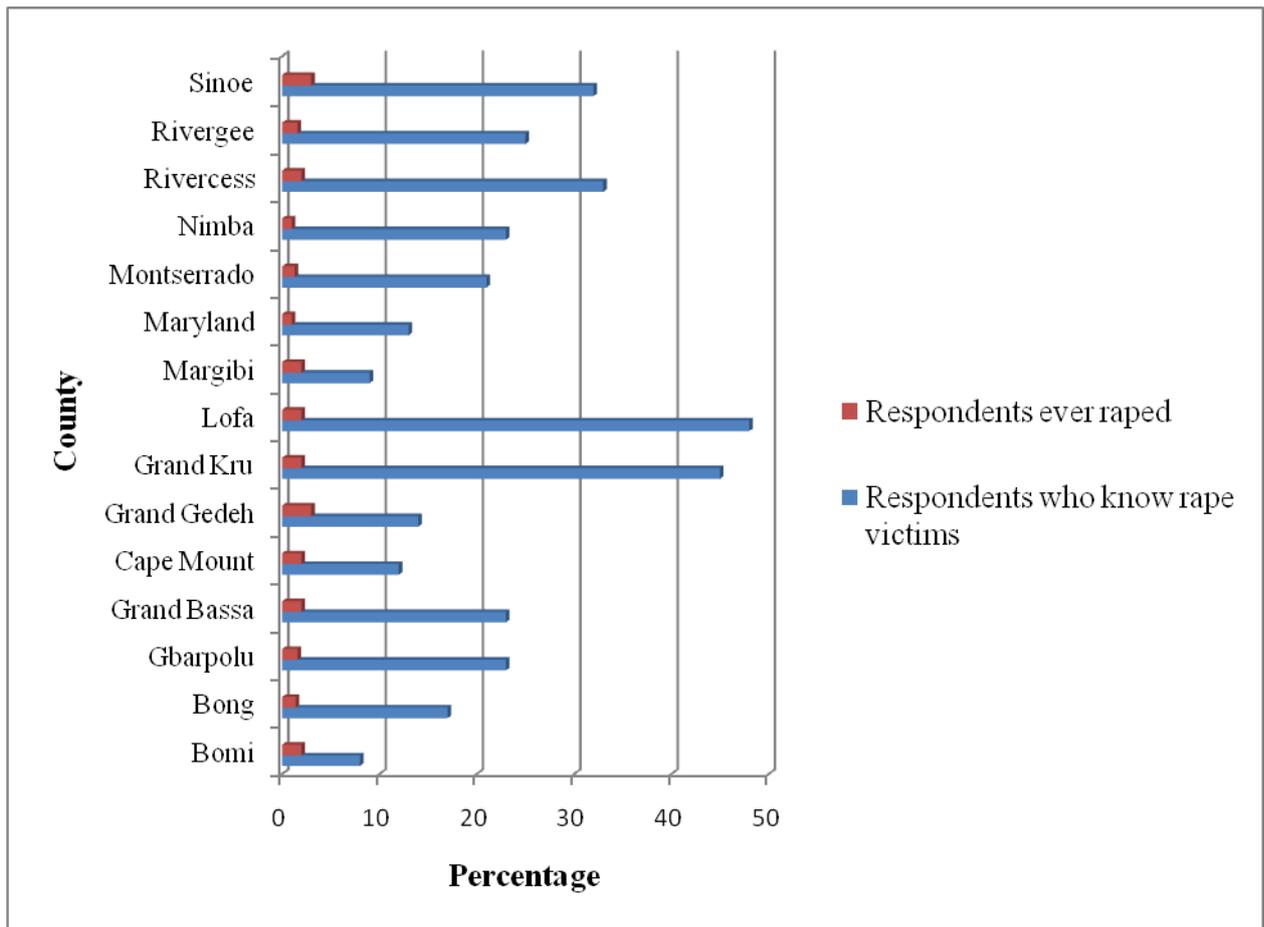
**Table 4: Rape prevalence by county**

County	Total	% ever raped	% who knew someone who has been raped
Bomi	109	1.8	8
Bong	294	1.4	17
Gbarpolu	61	1.6	23
Grand Bassa	195	2	23
Cape Mount	108	1.8	12
Grand Gedeh	90	3.3	14
Grand Kru	49	2	45
Lofa	262	1.9	48
Margibi	174	1.7	9
Maryland	111	0.9	13
Montserrado	888	1.3	21
Nimba	395	0.7	23
Rivercess	54	1.8	33
Rivergee	61	1.6	25
Sinoe	91	3.2	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>2942</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>22</b>

A total of 657 (22%) respondents reported knowing someone who had been raped. This equates to approximately one out of every 5 respondent knowing someone who has been raped. Of those who knew a survivor, 55% reported knowing only one survivor; 25% knew

two survivors; 11% knew 3 survivors; 4% knew 4 survivors and 8% know 5 or more. Given the possibility that a known rape case may have been reported multiple times, each respondent who reported knowing more than one survivor has been credited with only one known incident to offset the possibility of multiple counting.

**Figure 5: Prevalence of Rape per county**



As illustrated in Figure 4, over 40% of the respondents from Lofa (48%) and Grand Kru (45%) and a third of the respondents from Sinoe (32%) and Rivercess (33%) reported knowing a survivor. About a fifth of the respondents from Montserrado (21%), Nimba (23%), Rivergee (25%), Grand Bassa (23%) and Gbarpolu (23%) reported knowing someone who had been raped. There was a lower proportion of known survivors in Bomi (8%), Margibi (9%), Cape Mount (12%) and Maryland (13%). About 5% of the known rape incidents occurred before the war, 24% occurred during the war and 70% occurred after the war. The higher percentage of postwar cases is partly due to the fact that questions related to the most recent rape case known. The high percentage of known victims in Lofa may be due to

cultural factors. Lofa is a very traditional male dominated society. Respondents from Lofa were found to be less likely to consider forced sex in marriage and dating relationships as rape. Also, lower prevalence rates were recorded in earlier studies in Margibi and Maryland (LDHS 1999 & 2007) which indicates a relatively lower prevalence of rape in those areas.

Although a number of respondents were more willing to talk about incidents other than their own, there were some who were even reluctant to disclose information of incidents they knew about for fear that the perpetrators would be arrested. Some of the respondents did not want to be held responsible for the arrest of the perpetrators. This was so in spite of assurances from interviewers that the information requested was purely for research purposes. This tendency to protect perpetrators is partly due to the small and close knit communities existing in Liberia. As one police officer put it:

“Most rape suspects are relatives and community members. They fear that a relative will go to jail for life because of them. Because of this community members are not reporting rape cases.”

Rape is more likely to be committed in urban than in rural areas: 21% of urban respondents and 18% of rural respondents knew someone who had been raped. However, interviewers found that it was more difficult discussing issues of sex with respondents from rural than urban areas. As one respondent from rural Lofa noted, “sex should not be discussed openly.”

About a fifth (23%) of the rape incidents involving respondents who have experienced rape occurred in the victim’s home, 10% in a friend’s home, 25% in the perpetrator’s home, 13% in a public or deserted place, 2% at the workplace and 15% were not specified. The following are some of the experiences of the survivors of rape. According to one young female respondent:

“I was living with my guardian because my parents could not afford to send me to school. One day, my guardian called me in his room and started romancing me. I shouted but there was no one to come to my aid, so he jumped on me and forcibly penetrated me.”

According to another survivor:

“The sister of the rapist called me when I went to draw water. She said that she wanted to tell me something. When I went, she carried me in the room of her brother who jumped on me, forced me onto the bed and have sex with me.”

A male survivor also shared his experience as follows:

“This girl came to visit my friend and was unfortunate to find him home. I was in my room when she came and stood behind me. She began romancing me by putting her hand in my trousers and playing with my private parts. She put her hand in my anus. I didn’t want it. I was young and innocent then.”

A female respondent who was raped by a stranger observed:

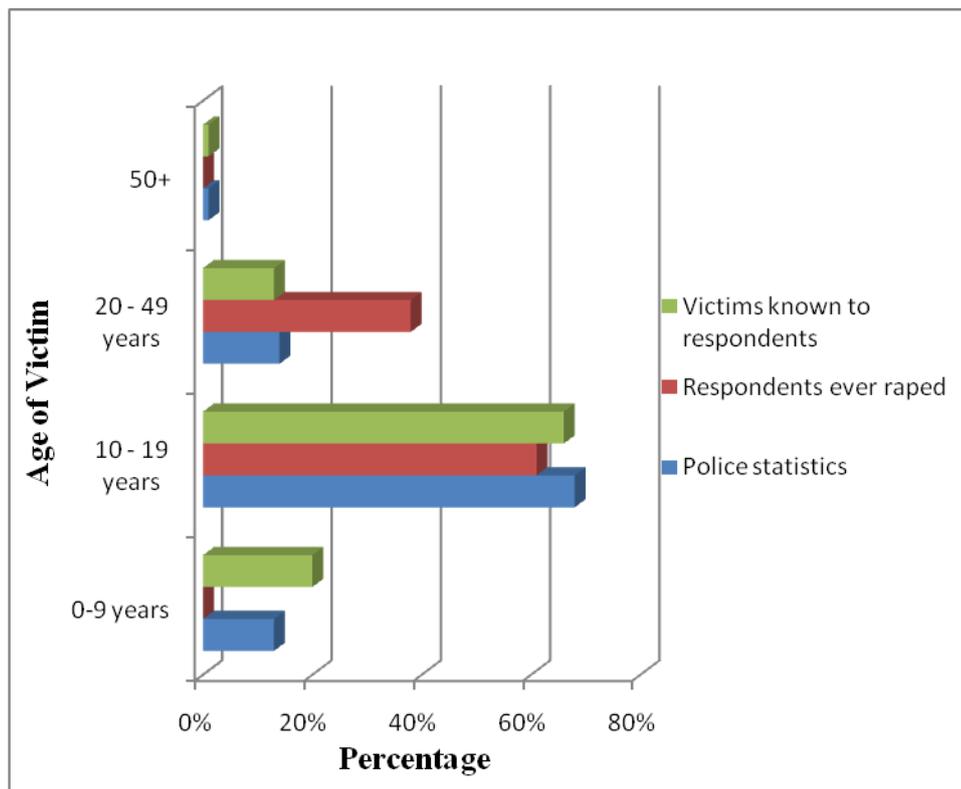
“The man came to see my aunt but she wasn’t at home. I was alone at home so he asked me for a glass of water. When I went in to fetch the water, he followed me and closed the door. He started holding and feeling my breast and had sex with me. I was shouting but no one came to my rescue.”

## **5.2 Characteristics of Rape Victims**

The victims of rape are more likely to be girls below the age of 19 years. Of the respondents who said they knew someone who had been raped, 66% of the known victims were also mostly between 10 and 19 years. Of this, 39% were between 10 and 14 years while 27% were between 15 and 19 years. A fifth of the known survivors (20%) were below 10 years old. About 13% were between 20 years and 49 years while 1% was 50 and above. Majority (97%) were females while 3.1% were male. These statistics are supported by respondents who admitted that they had been raped: about 61% of them were between 10 and 19 years old when raped. About 17% were 10 – 14 years old when raped, 44% were between 15 – 19 years old when raped. About 38% of the victims fell within the 20 – 49 age range. There was no respondent above 50 years who reported having ever been raped. The respondents who had experienced rape were predominantly female (95.9%). Two male respondents (4.1%) reported having been raped.

Police records from January to September 2008 indicate a similar pattern as most of the victims (68%) of rape were between 10 and 19 years old. Of those in the 10 to 19 years age range, 63% were children between 10 – 14 years while 37% fell within the 15 – 19 year age range. Reported cases of children in the 0 – 9 year age group (13%) were also high. About 14.4% of the victims were between the ages of 20 and 49 while 1% of the victims were 50 years and above. While 93.7% were women and girls, 4.1% were young men or boys. Figure 6 illustrates the age distribution of victims of rape in Liberia.

**Figure 6: Age Profile of Victims**



While it may appear that girls under the age of 20 years are the main victims of rape, a possible explanation for the statistics is that rape involving children is more likely to be reported as compared to rape involving adults. This is due to the fact that children are seen as the true victims of rape and unlikely to be blamed since they could not be said to have precipitated the assault. Child survivors are also more likely to be believed. In the focus group discussions, when asked if they would report it if raped, one young woman from Bong said “I will not report because people will gossip about me and men will be afraid to approach me.” A student from Buchanan added: “I will leave my community because people will talk about me and I can’t marry.” The stigma that is associated with a rape victim was summarized in these terms by a young woman from Nimba:

“She [the rape victim] won’t be respected in the community as before. Men won’t be brave to come near her. Men have a saying that my wife is only for my one. Many men are jealous. If they know you’ve been raped and the news is all over they will not marry you.”

The possible causes of the high prevalence rate of rape among children and young girls were explored in the focus group discussions. However, since this was not included in the terms of reference, the subject was not explored in much detail. Majority of the participants attributed the rape of children to ritual practices for power, money and position in the community or government. Unlike South Africa, there was no linkage to HIV/AIDS. Although ritual practices as a cause of child rape was widely articulated by participants, no independent verification was done by the researchers given the limited time frame and the fact that such analysis was outside our terms of reference. It however appeared from the discussions that the reference to rituals was a way of explaining a phenomenon that people found incomprehensible. A more in-depth research is needed on this issue.

Another factor blamed for the high prevalence of rape among children was the tendency of mothers to encourage their teenage children to date adult men for financial rewards which exposed them to sexual exploitation and rape. As a young female student from Montserrat put it, “Some families don’t have money so they use their children as instruments for money.” Another female student expressed the view that “some men think that by giving money to a child, they can rape the child because they will say I can’t get anything else from her.” An apparent explanation for rape of children in these explanations is perhaps the high poverty levels in Liberia. Women and girls are forced to fend for themselves in ways that expose them to sexual exploitation.

Other respondents blamed child rape simply on the preference of young girls by some men. According to some students older men preferred young girls because “young girls are good in sex so men won’t like to go to old women” and that there is a saying that “young chicken is sweeter than old.” One male student identified the lack of courage on the part of some men to approach older women as a cause of child rape. In his words, “Some men are ashamed to approach a girl. It can be difficult sometimes, especially if it is your first time.” Young girls are also supposedly preferred because they make fewer financial demands. In the words of a female student, “Men have a saying that children don’t have many expenses.” Some respondents attributed to high incidence of rape among teenagers to a lack of sex education by parents. A female from Maryland said, “Parents hide the facts about sex from their children. There is no sex education among the population.”

### 5.3 Characteristics of the Perpetrators

Rape is a crime that is mostly committed by men mostly between the ages of 20 and 39 years. Available statistics from the police from January to September 2008 indicate that nearly all the perpetrators (94%) of rape were men while 2.3% were female.

As shown in Table 5, the perpetrators are more likely to be young adults and middle aged men. Out of the 315 cases reported to the police between January and September 2008, 16% were less than 20 years, 41% were between 20 and 39 years, while 14.4% were 40 years and above.

**Table 5: Police statistics showing age profile of perpetrators**

Ages	Frequency	%
0-9	1	0.3
10-19	51	16.2
20-29	80	25.4
30-39	48	15.2
40-49	26	8.3
50-59	15	4.8
60+	4	1.3
N/A	90	28.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>315</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: LNP

Information obtained from respondents was based on estimated ages. Of the respondents who reported having been raped, 10% said the perpetrators were between 10 and 19 years old; 20.4% were between 20 and 29 years; 24.4% between 30 – 39 years; 20.4% between 40 and 49 while 4.1% were 50 years and above. About 45% of the perpetrators fell within the 20 – 39 years age range. A further breakdown of the perpetrators in the 10-19 age bracket shows that only 1 (2%) of the perpetrators was between 10 and 14 years while 8.2% were 15 – 19 years.

The 14 year civil war may help explain the age profile of perpetrators. Those between the ages of 20 and 39 years grew up during the war and may not have acquired the ability to negotiate for sex. Some of these perpetrators may well have been ex-combatants who have become accustomed to forcibly demanding sex from women and girls, a common occurrence during the war.

## **Victim – Perpetrator Relationship**

Of the 657 known incidents of rape, 64% were known perpetrators. Family members accounted for 13%, 36% were neighbours, 10% were friends or acquaintances, 3% were current or former partners, 2% were teachers or community leaders while 0.3% were either employers or coworkers. Of the rape cases involving family members, uncles (39%) were the most likely perpetrators. About 19% of the perpetrators were cousins, 13% were stepfathers, 4% brothers, 12% were former spouses and 7.2% were fathers. Strangers accounted for 15.6% of the rape cases, while members of armed factions were responsible for 2% of the cases.

## **5.4 Reporting Rape**

Most of the respondents (65%) who had experienced rape told someone about it. Parents (50%) and friends (22%) were the most likely people to be informed. Only 12.5% of the cases were reported to the police. Reports were also made to extended family members (6.2%) and NGOs/international organizations (3%).

About 64% of those who knew a person who had been raped said the incident was reported to the police. The rate of reporting for these known rape cases was lower in Bong (45%), Grand Gedeh (46%) and Nimba (32%) counties. About two-thirds of the known cases of rape were said to have been reported to the police in the other counties. The tendency to settle rape cases out of court has been found to be a major inhibiting factor to rape reporting. In the focus group discussions, a thirty year old woman who said she was raped when she was 25 years old had this to say:

“I told the traditional authority because I wanted them to take action. I had no money to go through the legal system. The perpetrator was asked to pay damage fees but I did not report to the police.”

Further, when asked who she would report to if raped, one female student from Grand Bassa said:

“I will take the case to the zone leader because you cannot go to the police without telling the zone leader. The zone leader is the head of everyone in the community so if you go to the police station, they will ask you whether you have informed the zone leader.”

Table 6 shows that rape is more likely to be reported in urban areas than in rural areas. Only about a third (34%) of the known cases was reported in the rural areas as compared to the urban areas where 68% of the cases were reported. The pattern is the same in the various counties. A high proportion of unreported cases was recorded in rural Nimba where 95% of the known cases of rape were unreported. In rural Bong and Lofa, 67% and 59% respectively of rape cases were not reported. Long distances, bad roads and transportation problems are probably the major causes of the low reporting rates in rural areas. The higher reporting rate in the urban centres may also be due to greater awareness of rape as a criminal act.

**Table 6: Rural/Urban distribution of known survivors who reported to the police**

Location	Did the person who was raped report to the police	
	Yes (%)	No (%)
Urban	68	32
Rural	34	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>36</b>

Younger survivors are more likely to tell someone about their experience. All the survivors who were less than 20 years told someone about it as compared to 64% of those between 20 and 49 who told someone about it. As regards the known survivors, over 70% of the incidents involving those less than 20 years and those 50 years and above were reported to the police. A lower number (61.3%) of the incidents involving those between 20 and 49 years were reported to the police. The higher reporting rate among the elderly and victims under 20 years may be due to the fact that they are more likely to attract sympathy than young adults and middle-aged women who may be perceived as having encouraged or provoked their abuse. Further, young unmarried adult women may be reluctant to come forward because of the potential harm that may be caused to their marriage prospects while women who are already in relationships may not want to jeopardize their relationships by speaking out.

Views expressed in the various interviews generally suggest that reporting rates in Liberia are higher now than ever possibly as a result of increased public awareness. The increased reporting may be due largely to the war and the subsequent awareness raising efforts which, to some extent, may have broken the code of silence surrounding rape. As one judge observed:

“I think that following the passage of the rape bill and awareness creation, more cases are now being reported. Previously, there was no awareness and therefore people were not reporting. This makes it appear that there are more rapes than before. During the war it was high but after the war and now, the commission rate is the same but the reporting has increased. Before, there was less reporting because of taboos about sex.”

#### **5.4.1 Challenges to rape reporting**

Stigmatization, shame and fear of the perpetrator were the main reasons given for the reluctance to report rape. Stigmatization and shame are often intertwined factors in rape reporting. Of the survivors who did not report their experience, 18% attributed it to stigmatization. Similarly, 17% of respondents who said they would not report it if raped identified the fear of stigmatization as the main reason. A female student from Grand Bassa put it this way: “The woman cannot stay in the community because people will say all sorts of things about her, things that are not true.” A thirty something year old survivor who was raped when she was 18 years old noted: “I did not tell anybody because I did not want people to know my problem and gossip about me.”

The importance of stigmatization is particularly telling because of the link to marriage and child bearing in Liberia. The perception that raped women are damaged goods was confirmed by a middle-aged man from Maryland who said that such women were “leftovers”. A male student from Nimba also said:

“I can’t marry a woman who has been raped because I have told God that when I am ready to marry, I should get a decent woman. A woman who has been raped has been damaged because she can’t produce children.”

The findings also underline the value that is traditionally attached to chastity before marriage. In the focus group discussions, one young woman had this to say: “It will not be easy to get married because the man will feel that another man has shared his wife especially if she is gang raped because he wants to own the woman.” Another female student stated that “men will feel that the woman has lost her pride and dignity.” These views were reiterated by some male respondents. Asked what they thought about a woman who had been raped, one young man said, “Men don’t want them. They feel that they have exposed themselves.”

Women who are raped are also stigmatized because they are perceived to have contracted venereal diseases such as HIV/AIDS. Asked what she thought of a woman who had been

raped, one female student said: “I will feel sorry for that person and she would not like to live in the community. People will look at her and think she has a disease.” Most of the male participants said they would only marry a raped woman depending on her medical status or condition.

Men who rape are not as stigmatized as women and may even gain some sympathy from community members. A young man from Nimba shared his experience as follows:

“If you are useful in the community or wealthy or give assistance in some way, some people will sympathize with you. Some will even say it’s not true. In my community, a man who built a road for the community was accused of rape. His family went to the girl’s family and apologized and he was set free.”

Victims often feel humiliated and embarrassed by their experience making it difficult for them to confide in others. Of the survivors who did not tell anyone about their experience, 17% linked it to feelings of shame. When asked if they would report it if raped, 42% of the respondents said they would not report because they would be ashamed to do so. Victims who feel a strong sense of shame may also blame themselves and feel that they could have done something to prevent the assault. A survivor who blames herself or is blamed by others is not likely to report her victimization. When asked if they blamed themselves for the rape, 22% of the survivors said they were to blame, 11% said they were partly to blame while 67% said they were not to blame. Some of the survivors, for instance, blamed themselves for entering into the perpetrator’s room, responding to a call or not adequately assessing the perpetrator’s motives. As one survivor said, “I blamed myself. I should not have travelled on that road alone. Travelling on such a road as a young woman tempted the man to rape me.” None of those who blamed themselves reported to the police. This validates Williams’ (1984) finding that women are more likely to report if they see themselves as victims and are assured that others will do same.

While reporting rape is difficult for all rape victims, men are less likely to report rape because it is considered more disgraceful for a man to be raped. In the survey, 48% of men who said they would be unwilling to admit having been raped attributed their attitude to shame as compared to 33% of women who said shame would be the predominant factor. Men feel embarrassed to talk about rape because the idea of being sexually assaulted is incompatible with their manliness (Smith et al, 1988). As stated by an adult man from Lofa, “It will be shameful for me in my community for people to hear I have been raped.” Being sexually

assaulted by a woman would be even more of an affront since men are expected to be more aggressive than women in sexual encounters, particularly in male oriented societies. In the words of a young man, “It is too shameful to tell anyone that a woman or my friend has raped me.” Other responses show that men are more likely to report male rape than female rape. A student from Montserrado said, “If a man rapes me, I will report it. But I won’t report it if a woman rapes me.” Another student from Montserrado explained: “I will not report it if raped by a woman because no one will believe me.”

It has been found that male victims of sexual violence by females are deemed more likely to have encouraged the act and to have derived more pleasure (Smith et al, 1988). This perception was confirmed by some male participants. A male student from Montserrado said, “I will not report it because I would already have sexual satisfaction.”

The fear of retaliation and threats by the perpetrator equally affect the willingness of survivors to report. About 17% of the survivors who did not report rape blamed these factors for their unwillingness to report. Children are particularly vulnerable to threats from known perpetrators. As one survivor noted:

“I told my parents but not from the beginning until I got sick. This made them concerned and so I told them what happened to me. I did not tell the police because I was afraid of the two men who did this to me.”

Further, most victims do not report rape because they fear that no one would believe them. In survey, when asked to comment on the statement that most charges of rape are unfounded, 56% of the respondents agreed with the statement while 37% disagreed with it. About 56% of women and 57% of men felt that most allegations of rape were baseless.

The perception that the police are corrupt and easily influenced by perpetrators affects the willingness to report rape. Of the respondents who said they would not report rape, 7% attributed it to a lack of confidence in the legal system. Similar views were expressed in the focus group discussions. Asked whether she would report it if raped, one female student from Bong pointed out that “I will not report it because the perpetrator can bribe the police.” The police are also perceived as not taking any serious steps to address the problem. A young woman noted, “Reporting is fine but if nothing is done, I will be ashamed.” A female student said, “Some police officers will say that you should provide proof or evidence. Why can’t they investigate themselves?”

The research further revealed that people perceive the legal process to be costly, preventing them from making formal complaints. In the words of one female student, “I will not report if my parents don’t have money.” Another female student from Montserrado remarked that “justice must be done to all men not because they have money.”

Familiarity with the perpetrator is a major challenge to reporting especially since most perpetrators are known. Rape by intimate partners and family members is less likely to be reported than rape by strangers. When asked if they would report a boyfriend or partner who raped them majority of the women said they would be reluctant to do so. One of the major reasons given was love for their partners or boyfriends. A female student from Montserrado said “I won’t report because I will not like to see him suffer because I know it is sometimes difficult to cool our emotions.” This tendency to protect partners was expressed by a female student as follows: “It’s hard to talk if raped by your boyfriend because you already have a relationship.” Women tend to protect their partners even when they feel aggrieved by their actions. A woman from Nimba said, “I will tell him that he has gone against my will so I will stop that relationship and get someone who understands me but I will not report it.”

The view that intimate partners should not be reported was also shared by male participants. When asked if a boyfriend should be reported for rape this is what one male student had to say:

“Liberians have a culture. There were no prisons and yet quarrels were settled. If there is a misunderstanding between family members, it should be handled by family members and town chiefs. Our lovers shouldn’t be taken to jail.”

The comment above shows that people do not perceive forced sex in intimate relationships as a crime but as a domestic issue to be settled within domestic circles. It also emphasizes the common belief that women or family members should not wash their dirty linen in public.

A second reason for the reluctance to report partners was the fear of abandonment. Of the survivors who did not report the rape, 6% attributed it to the fear of rejection by their partners. As one young woman put it, “I won’t report my boyfriend because I love him and will not want him to leave me.” Female participants in the focus group discussions were concerned that reporting their partners would deprive them of their breadwinners. This

concern is reasonable given that the 2007 LDHS found that women are more likely to be dependent on men since there are more employed men than women in Liberia. Rape is more likely to be settled as a domestic issue between partners especially where the couple has children. A female student opined, “I will tell my parents but it will not be right to take him to the station.” As one middle aged woman from Montserrado noted, “If we have children, I will settle it. Who will take care of me and the children?” Another young man noted:

“In Liberia, if you are talking about boyfriend and girlfriend, you will be talking about people who have been living together for a long time. So if people have children and you jail the person who will take care of the children. He should be talked to not to do it again because you will be putting people out on the street with no father.”

Thirdly, some women fear that they will not be taken seriously if they reported that they had been raped by their partners. In the opinion of one young woman from Buchanan, “I will be ashamed. Maybe if I report it the police will say how could you be raped by your own boyfriend?” A female student also stated: “It will be disgraceful to say that your own boyfriend has raped you.”

Comments by some male participants in the focus group discussion indicate that forced sex in intimate relationships may not be considered a crime unless the victim sustained some form of physical injury. When asked if a boyfriend should be punished for raping his girlfriend, this is what young man from Nimba said: “If there’s damage then he has to go to jail otherwise he should be forgiven because it’s a feeling that came over him.” This view was supported by another male participant.

“The boyfriend shouldn’t go to jail because sometimes the girl won’t accept to have sex initially but will do so after some time. Then after the sex she will go out and say she was raped. If no damage was done, then there was no force so he shouldn’t go to jail.”

These comments highlight the way in which people associate rape with physical violence and injury while ignoring the more insidious emotional consequences.

A significant number of respondents (12%) based their failure to report rape on the fear of parents or guardians. The focus group discussions highlighted the fact that this may be an issue particularly among teenagers. As one female student from Montserrado put it, “I will not report to anyone because I do not want my parents to know that I have a boyfriend.”

Obviously, for this student and others like her, the fear of her parents getting to know she had a boyfriend was more daunting than any other consequence of the assault. This comment may be indicative of a common understanding within the society of an acceptable age for dating. Teenage girls who begin the dating process prematurely may be reluctant to report rape by their boyfriends because of the likelihood of being blamed.

When the perpetrator is a family member, the reporting rates to law enforcement agencies are likely to be lower than otherwise. As one young woman put it, “I will report to the family elders if it is a family member.” Asked whether she would report a family member who rapes her, “It depends on how serious the family is about it but it has been happening.” A very harsh sentence may further discourage survivors from reporting family members and other known perpetrators.

Some people may not be reporting rape simply because they do not know rape is a crime. One young woman from Lofa narrated her experience.

“Some time ago, my work mate attempted to rape me on the job at night but I didn’t report it. I was afraid to be dismissed from my job because it was the attempted rapist’s older brother who owned the firm. I didn’t know it was a crime. My friend whom I told about it was annoyed with me for not reporting the act. Now I know and will report a case like this in the future.”

Lapses in the legal process have an impact on the willingness to report rape. First, the lack of privacy and confidentiality when reporting rape has an adverse impact on reporting. While majority of the WACPS conduct interviews in private, a few were found to be conducting interviews in public due to lack of space. A policewoman from the Greenville WACPS revealed that there is no space for conducting victim and suspect interviews. Consequently, such interviews are conducted in public offices. As the police officer put it, “both victim and suspect feel uncomfortable when at the police station.”

### **5.5 Challenges to Rape Investigation and Prosecution**

Rape cases are typically some of the most difficult cases to investigate and prosecute because there are often no witnesses other than the perpetrator and victim, hence the low prosecution rates. Of the respondents who had experienced rape, only 12% reported that their cases were prosecuted. Statistics obtained from the Solicitor-General also indicate that that in 2007, only

15% of rape cases were completed while 9.4% were fully prosecuted in 2006. In Liberia, problems within the criminal justice system play a major role in the low prosecution rates. Interviews with the police, judges and attorneys revealed some of the challenges confronting rape prosecution.

The public nature of rape trials in most courts in Liberia is a major obstacle to rape reporting. Only three counties, Cape Mount, Grand Bassa and Rivercess, reported that rape trials were held in camera. Some trials are conducted in public due to the lack of the appropriate facilities in some of the court houses for private hearings. As observed by a judge in Grand Kru:

“All rape cases are to be tried in camera but because there is no proper court house, the city hall is used. All rape cases are therefore tried in public. Survivors are not willing to testify in court because of the fear of stigmatization and threats from the perpetrator.”

Other trials are conducted in public due to ignorance of the provisions of the Rape Amendment Act or a lack of understanding on the part of some attorneys and judges as to the effect of public rape trials on survivors. While most judges recognized the unwillingness of survivors to testify as a key challenge to rape prosecution, very few linked this attitude to public rape trials. When asked why rape trials were being held in public contrary to the Rape Amendment Act, some judges argued that rape trials, like all others, had to be heard in public to ensure fairness. As one attorney put it, “We want the trial to be transparent, open and fair.” Another judge was of the view that it was up to the lawyers, not the judge, to make an application for in camera hearings. In the opinion of one judge, trials are held “in public because the law requires public hearings with regards to evidence.”

Judges and county attorneys were asked what they thought the effect of public trials was on survivors, especially children. Some were quick to say that survivors encountered no problems. A judge who thought that survivors had no problem testifying in public nonetheless gave an example of a case where the child could not express herself in court although she was able to do so in his office before the trial. Another county attorney who admitted that some children found it difficult talking about their experience in court noted however that child victims generally did not encounter any special problems. However, researchers have found that although rape trials are traumatic for victims, they can be even more distressing for minors. Children are often intimidated by the presence of the perpetrator,

becoming scared, confused and unable to understand questions when testifying (Goodman et al, 1992). Anxieties related to testifying in public and in the presence of the accused may affect the ability of the child to recall and recount events properly, hence the need for appropriate protective measures during trial.

A common complaint made by the police and prosecutors was the disinterest of survivors and their families in pursuing their cases. The findings suggest that this apparent disinterest may be due in part to the failure to adequately inform survivors about the legal process. This is evident from the comments of a judge who noted, “They don’t show up because of ignorance, not knowing that they have to present evidence.” Similarly, some police officers reported that survivors sometimes thought that reporting to the police was the end of the process and, therefore, did not follow up. This was even more so where the alleged perpetrator was arrested.

Delays by the prosecution were also mentioned a problem in rape prosecution. One judge had this to say:

“The prosecution is often not up to the task of marshalling the evidence. They are always seeking adjournments to put evidence together. There are too many delay tactics on the part of the prosecution.”

Some delays were also attributed to inefficiency on the part of some typists, clerks and other support staff of the courts resulting from a lack of proper training. According to a police woman, cases that are transferred to the courts are sometimes misplaced because of inefficient filing systems.

A common theme that ran through the list of challenges provided by the key informants was the inadequate evidence often adduced at trial by the prosecution. Securing medical reports and doctors to testify are major challenges. Furthermore, some judges identified the absence of forensic evidence as a significant problem when deciding cases of rape. According to one judge, “one of the major challenges is the prosecution’s failure to gather sufficient evidence and the lack of facilities to conduct forensic examination.” An attorney also noted that “most of the cases last year were thrown out because of lack of evidence such as genuine police sheet, medical report and statements of witnesses and that led to the discharge of defendants”. The evidentiary problems faced at trial could be traced to deficient police investigation

resulting from inadequate logistical support. The police are ill equipped to conduct investigations properly, make follow ups on survivors or effect arrests. Incompetent prosecution also accounts for this problem. Undoubtedly, the level of experience of a prosecutor is central to a successful rape prosecution. Some prosecutors blamed the quality of rape prosecution on the lack of research material.

The failure of the police and the prosecution to assemble the necessary evidence puts pressure on judges because of the intense public scrutiny and pressure in rape cases. According to some judges, there is always pressure to convict in rape cases even where there is no basis for the conviction. Acquittals feed into the public perception that the police and judiciary are corrupt. This was apparent from the skepticism expressed by some respondents about human rights advocacy in criminal cases. They blamed the advocates for the government's inability to deal decisively with rapists. As one student put it, "These days when someone commits a crime, they say there's something called human rights. But if a person is raped, no human rights should be applied." Evidently, while it is important to educate people on rape reporting, it is equally important to educate them on the criminal justice process.

Pressure from family and perpetrators to compromise cases was also identified as a challenge to rape investigation and prosecution. On this issue, one judge stated that "trials are becoming tedious because parents and relatives are constantly begging for cases to be compromised." Survivors who do not wish to take part in a trial end up abandoning the case or moving from their known locations.

Interestingly, the penalty for rape in Liberia was said to be a barrier to achieving convictions. Some judges and county attorneys reported that juries tend to sympathize with accused persons and acquit because of the long sentences prescribed. One circuit court judge noted: "In one case where the accused was 21 years old, they found him not guilty because they thought he was too young to spend all his life in jail." Another judge pointed out that:

"Jurors always look at the length of the sentence when the defendant is found guilty i.e. from ten years to life. Because of that they tend to sympathize with the defendant in coming out with the verdict."

This reasoning possibly shows that there are people who think that the punishment for rape is not commensurate with the crime or that the penalty is too harsh.

## 5.6 Youth and Societal Attitudes to rape

As noted earlier, a person's attitude to rape may be shaped by his/her acceptance of rape stereotypes (Burt 1980) and thus helps explain the prevalence rape within a given society. Rape stereotypes inhibit reporting as they focus on victim blame as a means of denying or legitimizing rape. Blaming the victim allows the perpetrator to engage in forced sexual relations without thinking of himself as a rapist (Allison & Wrightman, 1993).

To find out the attitudes of people towards rape in Liberia, respondents in the survey were asked to state their agreement or disagreement with a number of statements. Similar issues were discussed in the focus group discussions for more detailed responses. The responses provided in the survey are shown in Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Attitudes to rape**

Statement	Agree %	Disagree %	Undecided %
Women contribute to rape by flirting with men	60.9	36	3.2
Women contribute to rape by being alone in deserted areas	47.6	49.4	3
Women contribute to rape by being alone with a man in a room	61.9	35.1	3
Wearing revealing clothes	83.4	15.1	1.6
Women who engage in commercial sex are more likely to be raped	71.8	24.4	3.7
Women with multiple partners are more likely to be raped	71.2	25.7	3.2
Men who have taken alcohol or drugs are more likely to rape	85.6	12.5	2
Women who drink are more likely to be raped	87.3	11.3	1.5
Women are to blame for rape	51.9	45.2	2.9
Most of the time when women say "no" to sex they mean "yes"	21.2	74.2	4.5
Forced sex must be accompanied by physical violence to constitute rape	64.1	33.8	2
Rape cannot be committed in marriage	44.3	52.2	3.4
Most charges of rape are unfounded	56.1	36.7	7.2
Men who commit rape should be given harsh sentences	90.5	7.3	2.2

It should be possible for a woman to rape a man	55.8	38.6	5.6
Most rapes happen because women encourage men	68.3	28.5	3.2
If a woman does not want to be raped, she could fight off her attacker	75.9	21.6	2.6
Forced sex with a virgin is acceptable	14.5	82.7	2.8
Men are to blame for rape	76.7	20.5	2.8
A man has a right to sex, with or without a woman's consent	12.8	84.3	2.9
Rape is a very serious crime	96.3	2.7	0.9

## 5.5.1 Social Attitudes to Rape

### a. Responsibility for rape

Questions were asked to test people's perception of the role women play in rape. Although both men and women were blamed for rape more blame was attributed to men than women. When asked who they thought should be blamed for rape, 52% of the respondents believed that women were to blame as compared to 77% who blamed men for rape. The same percentage of both men and women (51%) blamed women for rape. Respondents who are above 50 years old (56%) are more likely to hold women responsible for rape than the youth (53%) and those between 25 and 49 years old (52%). The youth (78%) and respondents between 25 and 49 years (77%) were more likely to blame men for rape than those 50 years old and above (70%). Men (63%) were slightly more likely than women (60%) to blame women for rape.<sup>1</sup>

About 68% of the respondents also believed that most rapes happen because women encourage men. A slightly higher percentage of men (70%) agreed to this statement as compared to women (67%). The youth (32%) are less likely to agree that most rape incidents happen because women encourage men as compared to those above 25 years (56%). In terms of how women encourage rape, about 60% of the respondents thought that women contribute to rape by being alone with a man or flirting with him. As one male student from Montserrado put it, "Women are raped because of the way they behave around men." In the words of a female student, "Men do not rape women in the streets. If you follow a man into his room and he rapes you, you are responsible." Another female student said, "A woman has no reason to enter a man's room. Even if he's your uncle, you must stay outside."

An overwhelming number of respondents (83%) thought that women contribute to rape by wearing revealing clothes. An equally high percentage (84%) of the youth agreed that the "dress code" was a major cause of rape. Although this belief was shared by both men and women, men (86%) were found to be more likely to believe this myth than women (82%). Women who wear revealing clothes are seen as "advertising their bodies". In the view of one adult woman, "If a woman doesn't dress to attract the man she won't be raped." A male student expressed the view that "There are some parts of a woman that are attractive and when you see a woman like that you follow her and hijack her in a deserted place and rape her." Another male student had this to say: "It's not the desire of the men to rape but

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<sup>1</sup> A table disaggregating the responses by gender is attached as Appendix I.

sometimes due to the physical appearance of the girls on the street.” In line with such perspectives, one male student from Montserrado made some interesting observations.

“There are two types of rape, accidental and intentional rape. Intentional rape is where the person has the mind to do it. Accidental rape is about the way the woman dressed or behaved towards the man and at the end of the day she tries to say that the man raped her. If you do it intentionally, you are not a good man.”

Similar sentiments were expressed by the women. As one young adult woman put it, “Because of the way girls dress, the short clothes. Men are sexually active so when they see girls in those clothes, they can rape.” A female student in Bong summed this attitude up in the following words:

“In the community, people observe your behavior. If they hear that I have been raped, they will not consider whether I was forced. They won’t want to know. They will say she was raped because of her dress code. They won’t say the man did a bad thing so they blame the woman.”

Women who are raped when dressed “provocatively” are seen as deserving it. As one female student put it, “It is acceptable if I undress myself before a man and he rapes me. It is acceptable because I caused it.” Another female student had this to say:

“Women need to take care of themselves by covering themselves. God made the body for only one man. If my sister was raped, I would first investigate. If the reason is because of the way she was dressed, I will blame her.”

These attitudes portray women as willing participants in their own victimization and have implications for rape reporting. A woman who is seen as dressing suggestively may be unwilling to come forward because she will be judged harshly by the community and blamed for the assault.

Participants in the focus group discussions who disagreed with the dress code argument thought that it was an excuse for rape and one which they did not believe to be justifiable. One young woman suggested that “the dress code can’t encourage men to rape but it is their own desire, their imagination that makes them rape.” Another female student commented: “If they say they rape us because of our dress code, let us all start dressing properly and see what other excuse they give for rape.” One young woman added:

“Men are responsible for rape because I don’t think a woman will be able to cause a man to rape her. Even if you are sexually active, there are so many women who will

be willing to have sex for money.”

A male student who agreed with this position stated: “The dress code cannot be the cause of rape. A woman has the right to dress anyhow.”

Interestingly, a woman may be blamed even in situations where they could not be said to have contributed to rape. For instance, a wife may be blamed for denying her husband sex if he rapes another person. In the view of one female student from Grand Bassa:

“Men are not to be blamed sometimes. For example, in my community a woman refused to have sex with her husband and her husband raped her younger sister. In this case, you should blame both the man and woman.”

A similar view was expressed by another young woman:

“Some women abandon their husbands. I know a woman refused to have sex with her husband. The man had sex with the woman’s sister. The woman can be the cause of the rape. If she hadn’t abandoned the man, it wouldn’t have happened.”

In line with these observations, when asked what could be done to stop rape, a female student had this to say: “Women should agree with their husbands because the husband may not have anyone outside the home to have sex with. If the woman agrees, the husband will not rape her.”

The perception that promiscuous women are the most likely to be raped was also apparent. Over 70% of the respondents believed that women who engaged in prostitution or had multiple partners were more likely to be raped. There were no significant differences between men and women on this issue. This perception of the rape victim is erroneous since any woman is at risk of rape. A victim who is considered promiscuous is more likely to be blamed or said to have asked for it.

Men were blamed for their failure to support their families financially which forced their children to date older men. A female student from Montserrado noted: “If the men maintain their children, they will not be raped. Some men do not want to support their children.” Men were also blamed for their failure to control their sexual desires. One young man made these remarks: “Sometimes men rape to satisfy their sexual desire. It’s not only because of the dress code.”

Alcohol and drugs were also identified as important contributory factors to rape victimization by participants the focus group discussions. Drugs and alcohol may reduce a woman's inhibitions such that she is unable to anticipate danger until it is too late. It may also make a man more aggressive and predisposed to rape. In the survey, 87.3% of the respondents thought that women who drink alcohol are more likely to be raped. About 83.6% of the respondents felt that men who took drugs or alcohol were more likely to rape.

The high prevalence of rape in Liberia was also linked to perceived government inaction. According to one young female, "the punishments are not being carried out because those who are sentenced are set free which encourages other people to rape." Another had this to say: "no action is being taken because the people in government are the ones doing it." A female student blamed parents and the community for failing to bring up their children properly.

A notable point that was made in the focus group discussions involving students was that rape was used to punish women who were considered as playing hard to get. This attitude was more prevalent among students. Girls who refuse sexual advances from young men are at risk of rape, especially gang rape "party". A male student observed that "when a man likes a girl and the girl refuses, he can rape her." According to another male student, "sometimes it's not because of the dress code as such. When you love a person and she disagrees and you see her in revealing clothes, you can call her to your place and rape her." In the words of one female student from Montserrado,

"In the community, if you are someone who doesn't like men, for example, if you go to church and you are raped, people will say she used to go around behaving like Virgin Mary, now she's been raped."

Rudeness on the part of girls was also mentioned as a risk factor for rape. One male student from Nimba cautioned that "girls should not be rude because they are sometimes raped for rudeness".

**b. Most of the time when women say no to sex they mean yes**

A woman's interest or otherwise in sex may be misinterpreted due to social and cultural norms that dictate the behavior of women towards sexual advances. Women are generally expected to be passive and, men, the initiators of sexual relations. In some communities, women are not expected to give in to a man's advances at the beginning of a sexual encounter

to demonstrate their good morals. Thus, even where a woman says no to sex, she may be perceived as concealing her real interest and forced to have sex nonetheless. To test the attitude of respondents to this belief, they were asked to react to the statement that “when a woman says no to sex they mean yes”. About 21% of the respondents agreed with the statement. There was not much variation between the attitude of the youth and adults on this. However, men (25.6%) were found to be more likely to agree with the statement than women (18.6%). Participants in the focus group discussions shed more light on this issue. Most participants did not categorically believe that a no by a woman meant yes, however, they noted that sometimes a no meant yes. Most participants believed that women sometimes refused initial sexual advances as a way of testing a man’s love for them. As one young man put it:

“Whenever you approach a female, she won’t instantly say yes. She will rather say no or perhaps she won’t say yes or no because she wants to see how best you love her. She just doesn’t want to give herself instantly.”

In support of this view, a male student from Bong said: “Some women think that if they say no and you leave them, then you don’t love them.” According to another male student from Montserrado, “Women as a whole are weak-minded. Even if they say no, there’s a way that you can change that no to yes.”

Some female participants also agreed with these comments. One adult female noted, “Some women don’t have the courage to say yes so they will pretend as if they don’t agree, so sometimes no means yes.” A student added, “Sometimes women say no not because they mean it but to see whether their husbands love them, if her husband manages to convince her that is not rape.” For others, women who show an unwillingness to have sex often mean it. A female participant from Lofa had these comments: “Some say no and mean no. Sometimes when they say no, they may look as if they are joking as if they don’t mean it but they do.” A female student from Nimba also added: “My no is my no. As a woman your no should be no. That is what makes you a woman. Your decision should be your decision as an intelligent person.” A young man from Bong supported this position: “Women need petting but if after that they say no then you have to leave them alone.”

The belief that women do not readily express their interest in sex was linked to traditional norms by a young woman from Lofa County,

“In some traditional practices, if a woman agrees to sex it means she is weak-minded and so other girls and boys will look down on her in the community. That is why some traditional women won’t agree at once but will allow the man to put pressure on her to give in to him.”

Closely associated with this myth is the belief that women love forced sex. When asked if forced sex was acceptable a young man from Bong put it this way: “It is sometimes acceptable because some people don’t see it as a crime. They consider it as love.” In the words of another young man, “Sometimes it is acceptable because some women love violence before they can give in.” A man in his 40s from Lofa had this to say: “This is one of the ways lovers can show their love to one another. So in this case, it is acceptable in the traditional community.” A male respondent in his 50s added: “Some women cannot give in willingly to sex. It has to be force or a struggle.”

Men who believe these myths are less likely to consider forced sexual intercourse in these circumstances as rape. A woman who genuinely does not want to have sex may find herself being forced to do so because her initial reaction is deemed to be the norm.

### **c. Forced sex must be accompanied by physical violence to amount to rape**

Rape is commonly perceived as a crime that is committed by strangers under very violent conditions. Victims of rape are expected to struggle with their attackers to demonstrate their unwillingness to have sex, hence the belief that women who do not want to be raped could resist their attacker. However, the conventional idea of rape as a violent attack by strangers is not supported by the experiences of rape survivors. Rape is usually committed by known people under circumstances in which no violence is applied and no injury sustained. Victims who do not fit the visual stereotype are either blamed for the attack or not believed. To test respondents’ perception of what a typical rape attack looks like, they were asked to comment on the myth that forced sex must be accompanied by physical violence to amount to rape. They were also asked to react to the statement that “if a woman did not want to be raped, she could fight off her attacker.”

Overall, 64.1% agreed that forced sex must be accompanied by physical violence to constitute rape. Further, 54.1% of the youth, 69.6% of respondents between 25 to 49 years and 70.5% of those 50 years and above agreed with the statement. Therefore, older respondents are more likely to perceive the rape victim in this classical sense. Men (67%) were more likely to agree to the statement than women (62%).

Three-quarters of the respondents agreed that a woman must demonstrate her unwillingness to sex by fighting with her attacker. Thus, women who do not show signs of physical resistance when raped may not be believed. One female student summarized this in these words: “Sex does not just happen so when you start and I am not interested, I have to stop it.” A male student noted that “if the woman walked into the man’s house or room and was raped and did not shout for help, it means she wanted it.” This supports the belief that it is impossible to rape a woman against her will.

These findings show that the perception that rape attacks are necessarily violent is pervasive. Survivors are less likely to report rape if the circumstances of the attack do not conform to this rape stereotype. Further, rape attacks that do not reflect this common perception are less likely to be prosecuted or even when they are prosecuted, convictions may be unlikely. The dilemma faced by rape victims in the criminal justice system was echoed by a Circuit Court Judge as follows: “With children it is easy to prove rape from the injuries, blood and other evidence. But for an adult, in the absence of injuries and forensics, it is sometimes difficult to decide if she was raped.” Another judge added:

“Evidence adduced by the state especially with regard to rape cases involving minors is not a problem. The medical report will show that there is rape. With those who are already sexually active and have no injury, it is difficult to make a decision.”

#### **d. Most charges of rape are unfounded**

Women are often accused of making false allegations about rape. Respondents were asked to state their views on whether or not women lie about rape. The majority (56.1%) agreed that women lie or make baseless claims about rape. There were slight variations in the opinion of men (57%) and women (56%). In Liberia, women are said to accuse men of rape when their demands for money are not met. As one male student put it, “sometimes women lie about rape when there’s no money for them.” A female student had this to say: “These days you see girls going around men for money. If he has sex with them, they say rape.” The myth that women lie about their victimization silences them and prevents them from coming forward with their experiences.

#### **e. Rape is a serious crime**

To test people’s perception of the seriousness of rape, respondents were asked to comment on the statement that “men who commit rape should be given harsh sentences” and that “rape is

a very serious crime”. Majority of the respondents considered rape to be a serious offence: 96.3% of the respondents considered rape to be a very serious crime while a lesser percentage (90.5%) of the respondents thought harsh penalties should be prescribed. A male student from Grand Bassa who did not think rape was a serious offence made this remark: “There are more cases that are more serious than rape such as murder. Rape is minor.” This student did not understand why so much attention was being paid to rape when there were other more serious offences being committed. While this view was in the minority, it is worth highlighting since it underscores the need for increased sensitization.

Generally, rape of children is seen as more serious offence meriting a heavier penalty than rape of adults. When asked what punishment should be given to men who rape in the focus group discussions, participants suggested harsher punishments for perpetrators who raped children below 14 years, typically a life sentence or the death penalty for the perpetrator, as the rape of children was unprovoked and more injurious. The suggested punishment for adults ranged from a few years in jail to counseling for the perpetrator. One male student was of the opinion that,

“If the person is below 10 years, the perpetrator should be given life but if she is 18 years and above it should be between 5 to 7 years, depending on the kind of injury because some women lie about rape.”

Asked what should be done to a person who raped an adult woman another male student replied: “Jail will not solve the problem. They should just advise the person who rapes.”

#### **f. It should be possible for a woman to rape a man**

This statement was intended to determine respondents’ views as to whether a man could be raped by a woman. Rape of a man by a woman is a concept that often does not conform to the society’s perception of the rape victim. The expectation of men as the initiators of sexual encounters is so rife that being the victim of sexual assault is incompatible with this expectation. Men who are sexually assaulted by women may thus be ashamed to report it. In the survey, 55.8% of the respondents thought that a woman could rape a man. As regards the youth, 56% agreed that a woman could rape a man. A significant percentage (44.4%) did not believe a woman could rape a man. Respondents who were 50 years old and above were the least likely to agree with the idea that a woman could rape a man. Interestingly, 65% of men agreed to the statement as opposed to 50% of women who agreed to the statement.

The survey also revealed two important issues. First, there appears to be some confusion in some people's minds as to how a woman could rape a man. This uncertainty was even expressed by a judge as follows: "Judges should be trained on the new rape law. It should be explained how a woman can rape a man." Part of this confusion stems from the general belief that rape of men is not part of the Liberian culture and, therefore, does not happen. A male student from Bong had this to say: "A man cannot be raped in Liberia because we Liberians do not believe in it. It is not part of our culture". Some participants in the focus group discussions felt that men could not be raped by women because they were stronger. One male participant put it simply: "How can a woman rape a man?" The perception that a man cannot be raped by a woman has implications for reporting. A man who is assaulted by a woman would be unwilling to report it for fear of being ridiculed.

Secondly, some participants questioned the definition of male rape because it places emphasis not on the forcible nature of the sexual assault but the penetration of an opening on the body. Participants gave examples of instances where elderly women took advantage of young innocent teenage boys and had sexual intercourse with them. Although forced, such encounters do not constitute rape under the Rape Act because there has technically been no forcible penetration of an opening on the male victim.

#### **g. Forced sex with a virgin is acceptable**

The purpose of this statement is to assess the belief that first time sexual encounters must be forced. More than three-quarters (82.7%) of the respondents disagreed that forced sex with a virgin was acceptable; 85.9% of the youth and about 80% of those 25 years and above disagreed. The high number of people who disagree with the statement is possibly an indication that the belief that having sex with children or virgins is a means of making money or gaining power is not widely held. This is what a male respondent from Bong who believed that forced sex with a virgin was acceptable had to say:

"Sometimes you will approach the person and she will agree but she can be ashamed to lie down with you the man. In this case, you have to force her to make her to get used to you. This is acceptable."

As another male respondent put it, "you have to force them if it is their first time."

### **5.5.2 Understandings of the notion of rape**

The definition of rape is an issue that often engenders controversy. While there is often no doubt that non-consensual intercourse constitutes rape, consent is defined differently in different contexts. For instance, in most societies, the concept of rape in marriage is a contradiction in terms because consent to sex is assumed in marriage and even in dating relationships. Traditionally, women are expected to be available for sexual relations with their husbands such that a woman's personal feelings or needs are not considered as valid reasons for the denial of sex except in exceptional circumstances. Particularly in patriarchal societies, sex for the man is seen as a marital right and he determines when and how that right is exercised. Within this context, forced sex in marriage is not labeled as rape. The same could sometimes be said for intimate relationships. Social norms also play a part in the definition of rape. Consent to sex may be presumed on the basis of certain societal expectations such as the expectation that a woman would resist the initial sexual advances of men as a sign of good morals. Forced sex in such circumstances would not be defined as illegal because resistance by the woman is not interpreted as a refusal of consent.

To be able to assess what rape means to people in Liberia, participants were asked to define it in focus group meetings. A female student from Montserrado said, "Sex is agreement. Forcing someone to have sex even if it's your wife is rape." In contrast, another male student defined rape as "having sex with a person who is not your wife." The different understandings of rape were reflected in the survey results. In response to the statement that "rape cannot take place in marriage" 44% of the respondents agreed while 52% disagreed with the statement. The youth (39%) were less likely to agree that rape could not take place in marriage. Respondents between the ages of 25 and 49 years old were evenly split over the issue: 48.6% agreed that rape could not take place in a marriage while 48.7% disagreed. The majority (53%) of those 50 years and above agreed that rape could not take place in marriage. From the findings, it is not surprising that marital rape as a concept is more contentious for those who are 25 years old and above; the majority of married or cohabiting couples falls within that age group and may have been engaged in instances that could very well be defined as rape.

Forced sex in non-marital relationships is often not labeled as rape. An adult woman considered forced sex to be "acceptable if it is my boyfriend or husband." According to a man from Nimba, "sometimes it is acceptable only if it is your partner but for other men outside the relationship it is not acceptable at all." Another young man made this contribution: "It is sometimes acceptable especially when it is your partner. It is not a crime."

Although over 50% of respondents believe that rape could be committed in marriage, the focus group discussions revealed that this belief may be more conceptual because most of the participants were not prepared to criminalize marital rape. When asked whether a husband or boyfriend should be punished for rape, a female participant who agreed that rape could take place in marriage said: “I will report a stranger but not my boyfriend or husband.” Another male student pointed out that while “people should respect others’ feelings, a husband should not be jailed for rape”. A man in Grand Bassa added: “a husband should not be jailed because they will have children. The man should be advised.”

In addition, when asked to comment on the statement that “not all forced sex constitutes rape”, 37% of respondents agreed with the statement. The youth (32%) were less likely to agree with the statement. A significant percentage of respondents between 25 and 49 years (42%) agreed with the statement. Importantly, while 58% of the respondents agreed that all forced sex amounted to rape a lower percentage (52%) agreed that forced sex in marriage did not amount to rape. Thus, people who generally disapprove of forced sexual intercourse may qualify their response depending on the context, in this case marriage.

To further probe what rape meant to respondents, they were asked if forced sex was acceptable. Over three quarters (88%) of the respondents said forced sex was unacceptable. 6% said it was acceptable while 5.8% said it was sometimes acceptable. Similarly, in response to the statement “a man has a right to sex with or without a woman’s consent” 13% agreed while 84% disagreed. These responses seem to suggest that the acceptability of forced sex depends on the context. Although 88% said forced sex was unacceptable, when asked about rape in marriage, a much lower percentage (52%) agreed that rape could occur in marriage. Similarly, in the focus group discussions, participants who said forced sex was unacceptable made an exception when it came to marital and other intimate relationships.

Forced sex by partners is considered to be a domestic matter to be settled privately. A young married woman from Bong stated: “My husband can rape but he’s already married to me and can’t spoil my future so I will call my parents to settle it so he doesn’t do it again.” Another young woman had this to say: “I will take him to the family. If he doesn’t stop, I will take him to the church.” In reality, some people do not consider forced sex in intimate relationships and marriage as a crime even if they agree that it can occur.

Religion, age and county differences were found in the attitude of respondents towards forced sex. As indicated in Table 8, Christians (10.9%) were less likely to see forced sex as

acceptable. Respondents who practiced traditional religion (33.3%) were the most likely to consider forced sex as acceptable. This was followed by men who had no religion (24.3). For Muslims, 14.3% considered forced sex to be acceptable. There was interestingly not much difference in the attitude of men (87.3%) and women (88.7%) towards forced sex.

**Table 8: Attitude to forced sex by religion**

Is forced sex acceptable?	Yes (%)	Sometimes (%)	No (%)
Christians	5.7	5.2	89
Muslims	6.5	7.8	85.8
Traditional	9.5	23.8	66.7
No Religion	12.9	11.4	75.7
Others	6.7	13.3	80

There were also generational differences in the attitude towards forced sex. Persons aged 50 and above (17%) are more likely to consider forced sex as acceptable. The youth (6.8%) were the least likely to say forced sex was acceptable. About 12.5% of those between the age of 25 and 49 said forced sex was acceptable. Therefore, the older the person is, the more likely he/she considers forced sex as acceptable. As observed by a woman in her 50's: "Today people talk about forced sex so much that it is not accepted, but in our time we knew nothing about it."

### **Justifications for Forced Sex**

Respondents in Bong and Lofa counties were found to be more likely to consider forced sex as acceptable. Marriage was a major justification for forced sex. For some respondents, a person who consents to a marriage consents to each and every sexual act that takes place within the marriage. One female student put it in the following words: "if you are married to a man, you should honor him." A man from Grand Bassa puts it more elaborately when he says:

"A husband cannot rape because before you get married, you should know that you should accept any behavior. That is why when you go to church, they will ask you, for better or for worse. A woman should be able to satisfy her man at all times and the husband should do the same. If the woman is not able to have sex, she should still sacrifice her happiness and have sex."

A male student from Montserrado made these comments:

“God made man and God made woman and said men should love their wives. But sexual feeling between man and woman should be equal. Women should comfort their man anytime the man feels like having sex.”

In the opinion of some respondents, a married woman traditionally does not have sexual autonomy as the man has the sole right to decide the conditions for sexual relations. This attitude was more prevalent in Lofa County than the other counties. A male respondent from Lofa had this to say: “According to native tradition, a woman has no right to say no if the man wants sex. So it is acceptable to force a woman.” Another male respondent observed: “It is not a crime when it comes to our culture. It’s just that things are changing now and new things are happening.” A male respondent forcefully argued: “A woman does not have her own decision when it comes to when to have sex and how to have it. That is why I say it is acceptable.”

One major reason for the perceived lack of sexual autonomy by women was the notion that women become the property of their husbands upon marriage. According to some respondents, the payment of dowry endowed the man with ownership rights over the women and therefore the woman’s consent to sex was not relevant. A female student from Montserrado was of the view that “women are the property of their husbands and therefore they should always please their man.” In the opinion of a male respondent, “because the man pays dowry, he has the right to have sex anytime.” Another male respondent noted, “A woman should always accept what the husband says. A woman belongs to the man so whatever he says is right and final.” This notion particularly telling in Lofa county. In the words of one man in his early 40’s:

“We married the women. They are not the ones who married us, the men. So anytime we want to have sex, they shouldn’t say no. And also forced sex in the marital home is accepted in our culture.”

Another male respondent from Lofa noted: “A woman should always accept what the husband says. The woman belongs to the husband so anything he says is right and final.” Yet another male respondent had this to say:

“A husband has power over the wife because he paid dowry to the parents of the woman. So it is his right to force the wife even if she is not ready to have sex. There’s

nothing wrong with it. We accept it in our tradition.”

The view that women were the property of their husbands was shared by some women as well. According to a female respondent from Lofa, “A man’s wife should never refuse to have sex with the husband because the husband is the owner of the woman.” Another female said: “We accept forced sex from men because the man has power over the woman and also because men own women from the beginning of God’s creation.” In the words of a young woman in her 30’s, “The woman is from the husband so anytime he wants sex, if the wife says no he will be right to force her. There’s no problem with that.” Sex is thus considered to be a male marital right by these women, the denial of which warrants the application of force. The comments from these women are not unusual since their socialization prevents them from recognizing their own victimization. Such women do not therefore self-identify themselves as rape victims.

Some respondents thought that forced sex was acceptable because women were merely sexual objects. According to a female respondent in her thirties from Lofa, “We were given to our husbands to enjoy us. So they have the right to force us if they want to have sex.” This position was reiterated by a male respondent in his fifties: “A woman is just a woman for man’s satisfaction. So when the husband is ready for sex there can be no objection. If she says no, then force is necessary. Then it is acceptable.”

Forced sex in intimate relationships was also rationalized on religious grounds. In the opinion of a woman from Montserrado:

“The bible says women should submit to their husbands. If the man doesn’t have any other person then you shouldn’t refuse. Otherwise, he will go out and have sex with someone else and it will be a sin.”

This view was supported by a young man who suggested that the “Bible says a man and woman’s bodies are for both of them. If you have a problem, talk to the person but if nothing happens and you force your wife that is not rape.”

The various justifications for rape point to the power imbalance between men and women in the society. Equating women to marital property and sexual objects reinforces the inferior status of women, violates their right to personal integrity and increases their vulnerability to rape. Their objectification makes violence against them seem more valid. A female student

summarized this in these words, “Most men see women as inferior to them and so they force them to have sex. They believe that whatever they say should stand.”

These traditional beliefs also uphold men’s sexual entitlement and reinforce their dominant position and control. Some men resort to sexual violence to stamp their authority on their partners. In the words of a male respondent:

“If the person is for you, she will sometimes want to be wicked by telling you that she doesn’t want to have sex. Because you don’t have any other person, you have to force them. This is not a crime in some areas.”

As explained by another male participant from Grand Bassa: “Some men believe that when a woman goes out, she has sex with other men and so they force the woman when she comes home and says no to sex.” Controlling women through accusations of infidelity is supported by the 2007 LDHS which found that 58% of husbands make such allegations as a means of marital control. Comments by male students that girls are sometimes raped for being rude or for refusing male sexual advances also emphasize the ways in which rape is used to control women’s behavior.

The power to force one’s sexual will on a woman is a way of affirming one’s masculinity. As pointed out by a male respondent in his fifties from Lofa “During our days, men did that to show their power and popularity in the community. There was no law to punish any man for doing it.” This shows that forced sexual intercourse may have been, and probably still is, a means of social posturing; a way of earning respect from male counterparts and members of the larger community.

### **5.7 Other Social Conditions contributing to Rape**

Three possible contributory factors to rape were identified in the focus group discussions. The first of these was the Liberian civil war. The war is said to have exposed young people to violence, making them form habits that they have not been able to shed. According to one female student, “people have become wicked because of the war. Because they had guns they forced people to have sex and they are still behaving that way.” The 2005 WHO global report confirms the fact that a person’s experience with violence and aggression as a child predisposes him to rape. Many young boys and men were abducted to serve in rebel forces in

Liberia exposing them to violence at a very early age. Ironically, the war may also have increased the willingness of victims to talk about their experiences. Respondents did not blame women who were raped during the war the sexual assault. For instance when asked if he would marry a woman who had been raped, a male student from Bong stated: “It depends on how it happened. If in the case of war she was forced, I can marry her. If she carried on prostitution and took a man’s money and was raped, I won’t marry her.” Also, with increased government and international efforts and continuous awareness raising, survivors and their families may have become more confident to report rape now than before the war.

Another explanation for rape focused on the financial standing of women. Young women and girls were criticized for being too demanding and materialistic. They were accused of asking for financial favors from men without thinking of the repercussions. Mothers were also blamed for encouraging their children to engage in premature dating relationships. Although women and girls were blamed for their materialism, the explanations given emphasize the link between women’s poverty and sexual violence. Financial stresses often push women into relationships of dependency where sexual favors are expected or demanded. Women in such vulnerable positions do not have the ability to negotiate when and how to engage in sexual relations, resulting in their exploitation. The fear of losing their means of support keeps them in these abusive relationships. Women’s poverty as a risk factor to rape in Liberia is supported by the findings of the 2007 LDHS. Women in Liberia were found to have a lower employment rate and were less likely to be paid in cash as compared to their male counterparts (LDHS 2007).

Men have been found to be more likely to consider rape as justifiable when they pay for a woman’s expenses (Muelhlenhard et al, 1985). Men who justify rape in this way may therefore not consider themselves as perpetrators. This finding is reflected in the comment by a male participant from Nimba that “If you provide for your girlfriend’s needs and she refuses to have sex, then force comes in. It’s all about the expenses. It will only be rape if she reports it.” A female student summarized this phenomenon in these terms: “Some men have a saying that I am raising my chicken to eat my chicken.” One male participant from Maryland observed that women are “careless” because they take money from men without questioning their motives. In Maryland, men who date young girls are called godfathers. These godfathers are known to support teenage girls through school, sometimes helping to finance small family businesses. A female participant in a focus group discussion stated, “I want the women to stop asking men for money all of the time, let women work and earn their own money, then

men will stop raping women and children.”

Poor women are also at risk of rape because they are forced to perform tasks that expose them to rape (Jewkes, 2002). These include fetching water from the river, walking to the farm on deserted roads and collecting firewood for cooking. As narrated by one survivor: “I was on my way to the farm, when the man saw me on the road. He just jumped on me and had sex with me. I felt very, very disappointed.” Another survivor from Maryland had this to say, “I went to dig cassava and this man came and pushed me and climbed on me and had sex with me. I was later rescued by a hunter.” Intervention strategies must therefore focus on alleviating women’s poverty to be meaningful.

The lack of youth employment was also blamed for the prevalence of rape. Older men and women have been found to be more likely to be employed than younger ones (LDHS 2007). Some respondents thought that youth unemployment in Liberia was causing frustration, which was being externalized in the form of aggressive behavior by men. When asked why rape was occurring in Liberia, one male student from Montserrado responded that “the young men are frustrated because there are no jobs.” A female student suggested that “the government should make jobs available for both men and women.”

### **5.8 Knowledge of the Amended Rape Law**

To assess people’s knowledge of the Rape Amendment Act, they were asked if they had heard of the amended rape law. Overall, less than half of the respondents (45.7%) said they had heard of the law. A low percentage of people knew about the law in Gbarpolu (16%), Maryland (23.4%), Nimba (21.9%) and Rivergee (12.3%). Men (50.8%) were more likely to know about the law than women (42.7%). The difference between men and women as to their knowledge of the rape amendment law may perhaps be affected by the higher literacy levels among males in Liberia (2007 LDHS). A lower percentage of the youth (40%) reported knowing about the law while 49.8% of those between the ages of 25 and 49 said they had heard about the law. This may also be a reflection of the higher literacy levels among the older generation in Liberia. The ignorance surrounding the Amended Rape Law was confirmed in focus group discussions. Some participants who claimed knowledge of the amended law were sometimes misinformed or confused about it.

## 6 RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To encourage reporting and increased recourse to the legal process, the SGBV Unit within the Ministry of Justice should be given the necessary support and assistance to be able to expand its operations throughout the country. There is need to train and employ qualified staff to perform the relevant duties. The unit should support victims through the investigations stage, court preparation and trial. It will also provide information and referral services. Its functions should include:
  - a. The facilitation of the movement of witnesses to court.
  - b. Provision of information on the legal process to survivors and their families.
  - c. Organizing court familiarization visits for witnesses before trial to minimize the fears of witnesses about the trial. This will demystify the court room for victims and witnesses.
2. To ensure national ownership and the sustainability of the efforts addressing rape, linkages should be developed between the formal and informal actors. Traditional authorities, churches and other religious groups should be integrated into rape advocacy programmes.
3. The government should dialogue with traditional authorities on how customary laws could be reformed to protect women's rights.
4. The Laws relevant to the issue of rape, particularly the Rape Law and the Inheritance Law must be synchronized to remove inconsistencies relating to the age of consent.
5. The Rape Law must be revisited to give a statutory minimum sentence in rape cases.
6. Given the high prevalence of rape among children, an in-depth study on the causes of rape of children should be done. This subject was not pursued in-depth in this report given the limited time frame and the fact that it was outside our terms of reference.
7. Impact assessment on all programmes geared towards addressing the issue of rape should be done on a continuous basis.
8. International donors and government must support women's empowerment initiatives and girls' education.
9. The government and its international partners should develop the forensic

investigation capability of the Police.

### **Recommendations for the Police**

10. The WACPS should be well resourced and continuously trained on women and children's protection and evidence gathering. Adequate office space and equipment should be provided for WACPS offices throughout the country.
11. Continuous training on women and children protection and evidence gathering in rape cases should be organized for the police.
12. Clerks within the police service and the courts should be trained on record keeping to ensure the proper transfer and documentation of rape cases from the police to the prosecution.
13. Survivors of rape must be well informed about the various stages of the legal process by the police, as the first law enforcement agency to respond to victims.
14. Safe homes should be provided in all the counties for victims.

### **Recommendations for the Ministry of Justice**

15. Support staff for the courts should be trained on secretarial and filing skills.
16. Prosecutors must be trained in rape prosecution. They must be educated on the need for protective measures for vulnerable survivors, particularly children, during rape trials. In addition to in camera hearings, measures such as screening the witness from the perpetrator should be employed. These measures are necessary given that a significant number of reported cases involve children.
17. A reference library should be provided for attorneys and judges.
18. Prosecutors must be encouraged to give feedback on the trial to survivors and their families. Decisions made by prosecutors and judges must be explained to them. Regular information flow will address some of the negative impressions survivors have of the criminal justice system.
19. Doctors should be sensitized on the need to testify in rape trials.

### **Recommendations for the Judiciary**

20. Judges must be trained on rape prosecution, particularly on witness protection methods.
21. The judiciary must ensure that rape cases are heard in camera in all counties in

accordance with the Amended Rape law.

22. The Ministry of Justice should be provided with the necessary funding to be able to provide the needed facilities for rape prosecution.

### **The Public**

23. Awareness programmes on the Amended Rape Law and of rape must be intensified in all counties. The education programmes should focus on the following:
  - a. Youth sensitization on the Rape Amendment Law and the consequences of gang rape.
  - b. There should be increased sensitization in schools. The Rape Amendment Law should be disseminated in schools. If possible, the law should be translated into the local languages and disseminated.
  - c. The public must be educated on the Criminal Justice System including the rights of the accused in criminal trials. Educating the public on the legal process will address some of the negative perceptions they have about the legal process and encourage reporting.
  - d. Attention must be paid to male rape. The public must be sensitized to the reality of male rape and encouraged to report it.
24. Public education must also focus on attitude change. There must be the promotion of non-stereotypical gender roles in schools, the media and the public. Teaching in schools and media coverage must be gender sensitive. The school curriculum should be reviewed to ensure the removal of all gender stereotypes.
25. All efforts on rape must be coordinated to ensure consistency in the messages given out to the public. There must be a standard procedure for rape awareness. NGOs must work together to standardize their campaigns and advocates must be trained on how to perform their advocacy.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDI

### X I

Statement	Male			Female		
	Agree %	Disagree %	Undecided %	Agree %	Disagree %	Undecided %
Women contribute to rape when they flirt with a man	63	35	2	60	37	3
Women contribute to rape by being alone in a deserted place	47	51	2	48	49	3
Women contribute to rape by being alone with a man in a room	61	37	2	63	34	3
Women contribute to rape by wearing revealing clothes	86	13	1	82	16	2
Women who engage in commercial sex are more likely to be raped	71	26	3	72	24	4
Women who have multiple partners are more likely to be raped	71	26	3	71	25	4
Men who have taken alcohol or drugs are more likely to rape	84	14	2	87	11	2
Women who drink are more likely to be raped	87	12	1	87	11	2
Women are to blame for rape	53	43	3	51	46	3
Most of the time when women say “no” to sex they mean “yes”	26	70	4	19	77	4
Forced sex must be accompanied by physical violence to amount to rape	67	31	2	62	35	2
Rape cannot take place in marriage	43	55	2	45	51	4
Most charges of rape are unfounded	57	37	6	55	37	8
Men who rape should be given harsh sentences	89	9	2	92	6	2
It should be possible for a man to rape a woman	65	31	4	50	43	6
Most rapes happen because women encourage men	70	28	2	67	29	4
If a woman does not want to be raped, she could fight off her attacker	77	22	2	76	21	3
Forced sex with a virgin is acceptable	14	83	3	15	83	2



Language of interview..... Interpreter.....

Date of Interview ..... Start time ..... Time Completed.....

**Field Supervisor** .....

**Office Editor's code**.....



*Please indicate whether you agree (A), disagree (DA), or Can't Tell (CT) with the following statements.*

<b>Contributory factors to rape</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DA</b>	<b>CT</b>
B1. Women contribute to rape when they flirt with a man			
B2. Women contribute to rape by being alone in a deserted place			
B3. Women contribute to rape by being alone with a man in a room			
B4. Women contribute to rape by wearing revealing clothes			
B5. Women who engage in commercial sex are more likely to be raped			
B6. Women who have multiple partners are more likely to be raped			
B7. Women who drink are more likely to be raped			
B8. Men who have taken alcohol or drugs are more likely to commit rape			

### **SECTION C: ATTITUDES TOWARDS RAPE**

*In this section, we would like to know your general views on rape.*

- C1. Is forced (non-consensual) sex acceptable?
1. Yes
  2. Sometimes
  3. No

C1.1 Explain your answer above

*Please indicate whether you agree (A), disagree (DA) or are undecided about the following statements.*

<b>Attitudes to rape</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>DA</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
C2. Women are to blame for rape			
C3. Most of the time when women say "no" to sex they mean "yes"			
C4. Forced sex must be accompanied by physical violence (beating, use of weapon etc)			
C5. Rape cannot take place in marriage			
C6. Most charges of rape are unfounded			
C7. Men who commit rape should be given harsh sentences			
C8. It would be possible for a woman to rape a man			
C9. Most rapes happen because women encourage men			
C10. If a woman does not really want to be raped, she could fight off her attacker			
C11. Forced sex with a virgin is acceptable			
C12. Not all forced sex constitutes rape			
C13. Men are to blame for rape			
C14. A man has a right to sex, with or without a woman's consent			

C15. Rape is a very serious crime			
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C16. If you were raped, would you report it?

1. Yes (*Skip to C16.2*)
2. No

C16.1 If no, why? (*Select the most important/influential factor*)

1. Fear stigmatization/publicity
2. Shame
3. Fear of retaliation by offender
4. To protect the offender
5. Fear of parent or guardian
6. Fear of rejection by husband or partner
7. I would settle the matter privately
8. Lack of confidence in the legal/judicial system
9. Don't have time to be involved in a trial
10. Religious or moral reasons
11. I don't think it is a crime
12. Other (specify)

C16.2 If yes, who would you report to? (*Select only one option. If more than one option applies, select police if the police is one of the places the respondent will go to. Otherwise, select the first person report will be made to.*)

1. Police
2. Parents
3. Siblings
4. Extended Family Member
5. Friend
6. Religious Leader
7. Traditional Authority
8. NGO/International Organization worker
9. Teacher
10. Other (specify)

C17. Why would you report to the person above? (*Select most important factor*)

1. Because I trust this person
2. Because I think this person will not blame me
3. Because I think this person will take action
4. Because I have nobody else to talk to
5. Other (specify)

#### **SECTION D: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE WITH RAPE**

*This part of the survey covers an area that you might find painful or embarrassing to discuss. In this section, we cover your own and people's experience with rape. By rape I mean (a) forced sexual intercourse with you (b) penetration of your vagina, anus with a body part or foreign object without your consent or (c) penetration of your mouth with the penis without your consent.*

*Please try to be as open and as truthful as possible. As we have already noted, the answers you provide will be held confidential and your anonymity will be guarded.*

D1. Do you know of anyone who has been raped? [*Explain rape as the forcible penetration of the vagina, anus or mouth with the penis, body part or foreign object*]

1. Yes

2. No (*Skip to D8*)

D1.2 If yes, how many people do you know who have been raped?

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5
6. More than 5

*(If you know more than one person who has been raped, answer questions D2 – D7 using the most recent rape)*

D2. How did you get to know about that the person above had been raped?

1. From the person who was raped
2. From the family of the person who was raped
3. From the friend of the person who was raped
4. From my friend
5. From the police
6. News media
7. Other (specify)

D3. Was the person who was raped male or female?

1. Male
2. Female

D4. How old was the person when raped?

1. 0 – 4
2. 5 – 9
3. 10 – 14
4. 15 – 19
5. 20 – 24
6. 25 – 29
7. 30 – 34
8. 35 – 39
9. 40 – 44
10. 45 – 49
11. 50 and above
12. Can't tell

D5. When did the rape occur?

1. Before the war
2. During the war
3. After the war
4. Can't tell

D6. Who was the person who raped him/her?

1. Family member
2. Non- family member (*Skip to D6.2*)
3. A gang (*Skip to D7*)

D6.1 If it was a family member, how was the offender related to him/her?

1. Current spouse
2. Former spouse
3. Father
4. Brother
5. Uncle
6. Cousin
7. Grandfather
8. Stepfather
9. Other (specify) .....

D6.2. If it was a non-family member, who was it?

1. Stranger
2. Neighbour
3. Friend
4. Family friend
5. Acquaintance
6. Current boyfriend
7. Former boyfriend
8. Teacher
9. Community/ Traditional Leader
10. Employer
11. Coworker/Work colleague
12. Religious leader
13. A member of a fighting force
14. Other (specify) .....

D7. Did the person who was raped report the rape to the police?

1. Yes
2. No (*Skip to D8*)

D7.1. If yes, how did you get to know that he/she had reported to the police?

1. From him/her
2. From the police
3. From a relative of the person who was raped
4. From a friend of the person who was raped
5. From a member of the community
6. Other (specify).....

D8. Have you ever been raped? (*Use definition of rape provided*)

1. Yes
2. No (*Skip to G1*)

D9. Have you been raped more than once?

1. Yes
2. No (*Skip to D10*)

D9.1 If yes, how many times have you been raped?

1. 2 times
2. 3 times
3. 4 times
4. 5 or more times

D10. What type of rape did you experience?

1. Rape by a single person only (*Skip to D11*)

2. Gang rape only
3. Rape by a single person and gang rape

D10.1 If you have been gang raped, how many times has it happened to you?

1. Once
2. 2 times
3. 3 times
4. 4 times
5. 5 or more times

D11. Have you ever been raped by the same person(s) more than once?

1. Yes
2. No (*Skip to D12*)

D11.1 If yes, how many times have you ever been raped by the same person(s)?

1. 2 times
2. 3 times
3. 4 times
4. 5 times or more

*(If you have been raped more than once, complete the questionnaire using **the most recent rape**. If the most recent rape is rape by a single person, **continue from D12**. If the most recent rape is a gang rape, **continue from D14**.)*

D12. Who was the person who raped you?

1. Family Member
2. Non-family member (*Skip to D12.2*)

D12.1 If he was a family member, how is he related to you?

1. Guardian
2. Former spouse
3. Father
4. Brother
5. Uncle
6. Cousin
7. Grandfather
8. Stepfather
9. Other (specify).....

D12.2 If he was a non-family member who was he?

1. Stranger
2. Neighbour
3. Friend
4. Family friend
5. Acquaintance
6. Current Boyfriend
7. Former Boyfriend
8. Teacher
9. Traditional/Community Leader
10. Work Colleague
11. Employer
12. Religious leader
13. Other (specify).....

D13. How old was the person who raped you?

1. 5 – 9
2. 10 – 14
3. 15 – 19
4. 20 – 24
5. 25 – 29
6. 30 – 34
7. 35 – 39
8. 40 – 44
9. 45 – 49
10. 50 and above
11. Can't remember

*(Skip to D16)*

D14. How many people were in the gang that raped you?

1. 2
2. 3
3. 4
4. 5 or more

D15. Did you know any of the members of the gang?

1. Yes
2. No

D16. When did the rape occur?

1. Before the war
2. During the war
3. After the war

D17. What form did the rape take? [*Circle as many as apply*]

1. Vaginal penetration with penis
2. Vaginal penetration with an object
3. Anal penetration with penis
4. Anal penetration with an object
5. Oral (mouth) penetration with penis
6. Vaginal penetration with another part of the body (other than penis)
7. Anal penetration with another part of the body (other than penis)

D18. How old were you when you were raped?

1. 0 – 4
2. 5 – 9
3. 10 – 14
4. 15 – 19
5. 20 – 24
6. 25 – 29
7. 30 – 34
8. 35 – 39
9. 40 – 44
10. 45 – 49
11. 50 and above

D19. Where were you raped?

1. My home
2. My friend's house
3. Rapist's home
4. Rapist's Friend's house
5. Public Place
6. Deserted Area
7. Work Place
8. Hotel/Bar
9. Other (specify)

D20. Describe the circumstances under which it happened

D21. Do you blame yourself for what happened to you?

1. Yes
2. Partly
3. No

D21.1 Why?

D22. Before your first rape, were you sexually active?

1. Yes
2. No (*Skip to E1*)

D22.1 If yes, how many sexual partners had you had before the first rape?

1. 1
2. 2
3. 3
4. 4
5. 5 or more

## **SECTION E: REPORTING RAPE**

*In this section, we would like to know the extent to which people who have been raped report to others including the police and the reasons why they report to the persons specified.*

E1. Did you tell anyone that you had been raped?

1. Yes (*Skip to E1.2*). No

E1.1 If no, why did you not tell anyone? (*Select the most important reason and then skip to G1*)

1. Fear of stigmatization/publicity
2. Because I was ashamed
3. Threats from rapist
4. Fear of retaliation by offender
5. To protect the offender
6. Fear of parent/ guardian
7. Fear of rejection by spouse/ partner
8. Lack of confidence in the legal system
9. Lack of access to the police
10. Don't have time to be involved in a trial
11. Religious or moral reasons
12. I didn't think it was a crime

- 13. Fear of not being believed
- 14. Fear that I would be blamed
- 15. Other (specify) .....

E1.2 If yes, who did you tell about the rape? (*Select only one option. If more than one option is applicable, select police if police is one of the choices. Otherwise, select the first person report will be made to*)

- 1. Police (***Skip to E6***)
- 2. Parent/Guardian
- 3. Sibling(s)
- 4. Extended Family Member
- 5. Friend
- 6. Religious leader
- 7. NGO/International Organization worker
- 8. Teacher
- 9. Traditional Authority
- 10. Employer
- 11. Coworker
- 12. Other (specify).....

E2. Why did you tell the person above? (*Select most important factor*)

- 1. Because I trust this person
- 2. Because I thought this person would not blame me
- 3. Because I thought this person would take action
- 4. Because there was nobody else to talk to
- 5. Because I needed to confide in someone
- 6. Other  
(specify).....

E3. Why did you not tell the police? (*Select the most important factor*)

- 1. Fear of stigmatization/publicity
- 2. Shame
- 3. Threats from offender
- 4. Fear of retaliation by offender
- 5. To protect the offender
- 6. Fear of parent/ guardian
- 7. Fear of rejection by spouse or partner
- 8. I wanted to settle privately
- 9. Lack of confidence in the legal system
- 10. Lack of access to the police
- 11. Don't have time to be involved in a trial
- 12. Religious or moral reasons
- 13. I didn't think it was a crime
- 14. Fear of not being believed
- 15. Lack of funds to go through the legal process
- 16. Fear of not being believed
- 17. Fear of blame
- 18. Other  
(specify).....

E4. Did the person you told above blame you for what happened to you?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

E5. Did other members of your community get to know that you had been raped?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No (*Skip to G1*)

E5.1 Did they blame you for what happened?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

*(Skip to G1)*

E6. Did the police blame you for what happened to you?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

E7. Where you interviewed by the police?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No (*Skip to E8*)

E7.1 If yes, where were you interviewed?

- 1. In public
- 2. At a private place (*Skip to E8*)

E7.2 If you were interviewed in public, did you feel comfortable about it?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

E8. Did you have any concerns about intimidation from the offender?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No (*Skip to E9*)

E8.1 If yes, did you inform the police about your concerns?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No (*Skip to E9*)

E8.2 Did the police take any action?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

E9. Were you made to undergo a medical examination by the police?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No

E10. What did the police do to the alleged offender after you reported the rape to them?

- 1. No action taken (*skip to G1*)
- 2. Offender was cautioned by police and let go (*skip to G1*)
- 3. Offender was charged with rape
- 4. Other (specify) .....

E11. Was the offender tried?

- 1. Yes (*Skip to F1*)
- 2. No

E11.1 If no, why?

- 1. The complaint was withdrawn
- 2. I was afraid to testify in court (*Skip to G1*)
- 3. The case was closed/discontinued by the police (*Skip to G1*)
- 4. Other (specify).....  
.....

- E12. Why was the complaint withdrawn from the police? (*Answer this question by selecting the most important factor and then skip to G1*)
1. To avoid stigmatization/publicity
  2. Threats from offender
  3. Fear of retaliation by offender
  4. To protect the offender
  5. Fear of rejection by spouse/ partner
  6. For private settlement
  7. Lack of confidence in the legal system
  8. Didn't have time to be involved in a trial
  9. Religious or moral reasons
  10. Because of the police were unhelpful or hostile
  11. Family pressure
  12. Community pressure
  13. Lack of funds to go through legal process
  14. Other (specify)

## **SECTION F. PROSECUTION OF RAPE**

*In this section we would like to know your experience during the trial*

- F1. Did you give evidence at the trial?
1. Yes
  2. No (*Skip to F4*)
- F2. Where was the trial held?
1. Open Court (public)
  2. Private place [*Skip to F4*]
- F3. If the trial was in open court, were you comfortable about it?
1. Yes
  2. No
- F4. How long did the trial take?
1. Less than 3 months
  2. Between 3 to 6 months
  3. Between 6 to 9 months
  4. Between 9 to 12 months
  5. More than 12 months
  6. Trial is ongoing (*Skip to G1*)
- F5. What was the outcome of the trial?
1. Don't know
  2. Offender was convicted
  3. Offender was acquitted
  4. The trial was discontinued/ abandoned

## **SECTION G: CONCLUSION**

- G1. Have you heard of the new rape law in Liberia?
1. Yes
  2. No

G2. What do you think could be done to curb the occurrence of rape in Liberia?

**Thank you very much for taking part in this survey.**

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FGDS**

*I am conducting a research on the youth's attitude to rape in Liberia. The information you provide will help in addressing the problem of rape in Liberia. Whatever you say will be kept confidential. Your anonymity will also be protected. I hope you will fully participate in the discussions. Your participation is optional. You may choose not to answer any question posed and may leave at any time. You may ask any question before we proceed.*

**Attitudes to rape**

1. What is rape? Is forcing someone to have sex against their will acceptable? Why?
2. What forms of rape exist in your community?
3. Can a husband rape a wife?
4. Why do people rape in Liberia? Why do people rape children in Liberia?
5. Who would you blame for rape? Why?
6. What do you think about the notion that when a woman says no to sex, she really means yes?
7. What do you think of men who rape?
8. What do you think of women who have been raped?
9. What kind of sentence should be imposed for rape?
10. What can be done to stop people from raping others? What can women do to ward off rape?
11. If you were raped, would you report it? Who would you report to? Why?
12. If a relative was raped, what would you do?
13. Do you think the problem of rape is worse now than last year? If yes, why is this so?
14. Have you heard of the new rape law?

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ATTORNEYS**

My name is.....I am conducting interviews on rape in Liberia. I would like to know the extent of the rape problem in Liberia, attitudes, reporting and challenges to prosecution. The information you provide will assist in the development of appropriate measures to deal with the problem. The information will be held confidential and your anonymity will be protected. Your participation in this survey is completely optional and we can proceed only with your permission. However, your participation is extremely important to us and, thus, I hope you will be able to assist in the survey. If you have any questions or concerns please let me know and I will be happy to address them.

**County:**

- |                      |                 |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| 9. Bomi              | 9. Margibi      |
| 10. Bong             | 10. Maryland    |
| 11. Gbarpolu         | 11. Montserrado |
| 12. Grand Bassa      | 12. Nimba       |
| 13. Grand Cape Mount | 13. Rivercess   |
| 14. Grand Gedeh      | 14. Rivergee    |
| 15. Grand Kru        | 15. Sinoe       |
| 16. Lofa             |                 |

**Location:**

- |                 |                        |
|-----------------|------------------------|
| 1. Tubmanburg   | 9. Kakata              |
| 2. Gbarnga      | 10. Harper/Pleebo      |
| 3. Bopolu       | 11. Monrovia           |
| 4. Buchanan     | 12. Sanniquellie/Ganta |
| 5. Robertsport  | 13. Cestos City        |
| 6. Zwedru       | 14. Fishtown           |
| 7. Barclayville | 15. Greenville         |
| 8. Voinjama     |                        |

Name of Interviewer.....

Organisation .....

Date of Interview .....Start time .....

Time Completed.....

### **Personal Information**

1. Name/pseudonym.....
2. Qualification/educational level.....
3. Place of work.....
4. Position .....
5. How long in that position?.....
6. Duties.....  
.....

### **Interview Guide**

1. What factors do you consider when deciding whether to prosecute a rape case?
2. Where are rape trials held; in open court or private place? If in public, why?
3. On average, how long do rape trials take? Why?
4. What challenges do you face when prosecuting rape cases?
5. Are all rape cases given a full trial? Why are some rape trials discontinued or abandoned?
6. Do rape victims fully co-operate with you in rape trials? Are they often willing to testify?
7. Based on your experience, do you think the problem of rape is worse now than last year? Why?
8. What can be done to assist you prosecute rape more efficiently?
9. Do you think prosecutors need more training to be able to handle rape cases? What kind of training?
10. Any other comments?

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR JUDGES**

My name is..... and on behalf of UNMIL, I'm conducting research on rape in Liberia. We would like to know the scope, attitudes, rates of rape and challenges of prosecuting the crime in Liberia. The information you provide will be used in designing the appropriate interventions for rape. The information will be held confidential and your anonymity will be protected. Your participation in this interview is completely optional but extremely important to us. If you have any concerns we will be happy to address them.

<b>Identification</b> <i>[To be filled by interviewer at the beginning of interview ]</i>	
<b>County</b>	
17. Bomi	9. Margibi
18. Bong	10. Maryland
19. Gbarpolu	11. Montserrado
20. Grand Bassa	12. Nimba
21. Grand Cape Mount	13. Rivercess
22. Grand Gedeh	14. Rivergee
23. Grand Kru	15. Sinoe
24. Lofa	
<b>Location of Interview</b>	
1. Tubmanburg	9. Kakata
2. Gbarnga	10. Harper/Pleebo
3. Bopolu	12. Monrovia
4. Buchanan	13. Sanniquellie/Ganta
5. Robertsport	14. Cestos City
6. Zwedru	15. Fishtown
7. Barclayville	16. Greenville
8. Voinjama	
Name of Interviewer.....	
Organisation .....	
Date of Interview .....Start time .....Time Completed.....	

**Background Information**

1. Name/pseudonym.....
2. Level of Judge(what court).....
3. Qualification/Educational level.....
4. No. of years of experience as judge.....

### **Interview Guide**

1. Do you think the rape problem is becoming worse now? Compare this year to last year. On average, how many cases of rape do you hear in a month? Provide records if available.
2. What challenges do you face in rape trials? Do you often have the evidence needed to decide a rape case? Explain.
3. What factors do you consider when deciding a rape case? Does the conduct of the victim influence your decision in a rape case? If yes, what kind of conduct do you consider?
4. On average, how long do rape trials take?
5. Why are some rape cases discontinued or abandoned?
6. Where are rape trials held? In private or public?
7. What could be done to improve the prosecution of rape?
8. Do you think judges need more training to be able to deal with rape cases? If yes, what kind of training?

**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR POLICE**

My name is.....I am conducting research on rape in Liberia. I would like to know the extent, attitudes, reporting rates and challenges of prosecuting rape in Liberia. The information you provide will assist in the development of appropriate measures to deal with the problem of rape. The information you provide will be held confidential and your anonymity will be protected. Your participation in this interview is completely optional but extremely important to us. If you have any questions or concerns please let me know and I will be happy to address them.

<b>Identification</b> <i>[To be filled by interviewer at the beginning of interview ]</i>	
<b>County</b>	
25. Bomi	9. Margibi
26. Bong	10. Maryland
27. Gbarpolu	11. Montserrado
28. Grand Bassa	12. Nimba
29. Grand Cape Mount	13. Rivercess
30. Grand Gedeh	14. Rivergee
31. Grand Kru	15. Sinoe
32. Lofa	
<b>Location</b>	
9. Tubmanburg	9. Kakata
10. Gbarnga	10. Harper/Pleebo
11. Bopolu	11. Monrovia
12. Buchanan	12. Sanniquellie/Ganta
13. Robertsport	13. Cestos City
14. Zwedru	14. Fishtown
15. Barclayville	15. Greenville
16. Voinjama	
Place of interview.....	
Name of Interviewer.....	
Organisation .....	
Date of Interview ..... Start time ..... Time Completed.....	

**PERSONAL BACKGROUND**

1. Indicate rank.....

2. Department.....
3. Education/Qualification.....
4. No. of years of experience as police.....
5. Duties.....

### **Interview Guide**

1. Based on your experience, do you think the rape problem in Liberia is getting worse? Compare this year to last year. Why? Provide statistics if available.
2. Where do you conduct interviews with victims of rape when a report is made? In public or private? Why?
3. When victims of rape express concerns about their security what do you do?
4. What factors influence the decision to investigate or charge a suspect in rape case? Does the conduct of the victim influence your decision? If yes, what conduct do you take into consideration and why?
5. What challenges do you face when investigating rape cases? How do you deal with these challenges?
6. Do all rape cases end up in trial? Why are some cases discontinued or abandoned?
7. Based on your experience, who are the main perpetrators of rape? (age bracket and relationship with victim i.e. stranger, relative, acquaintance, friend). Provide records if available.
8. Who are often the victims of rape? (Age). Provide records if available.
9. What can be done to assist the police deal with rape cases? Do you think the police need more training to be able to handle rape cases properly?
10. Do you have any other comments?

