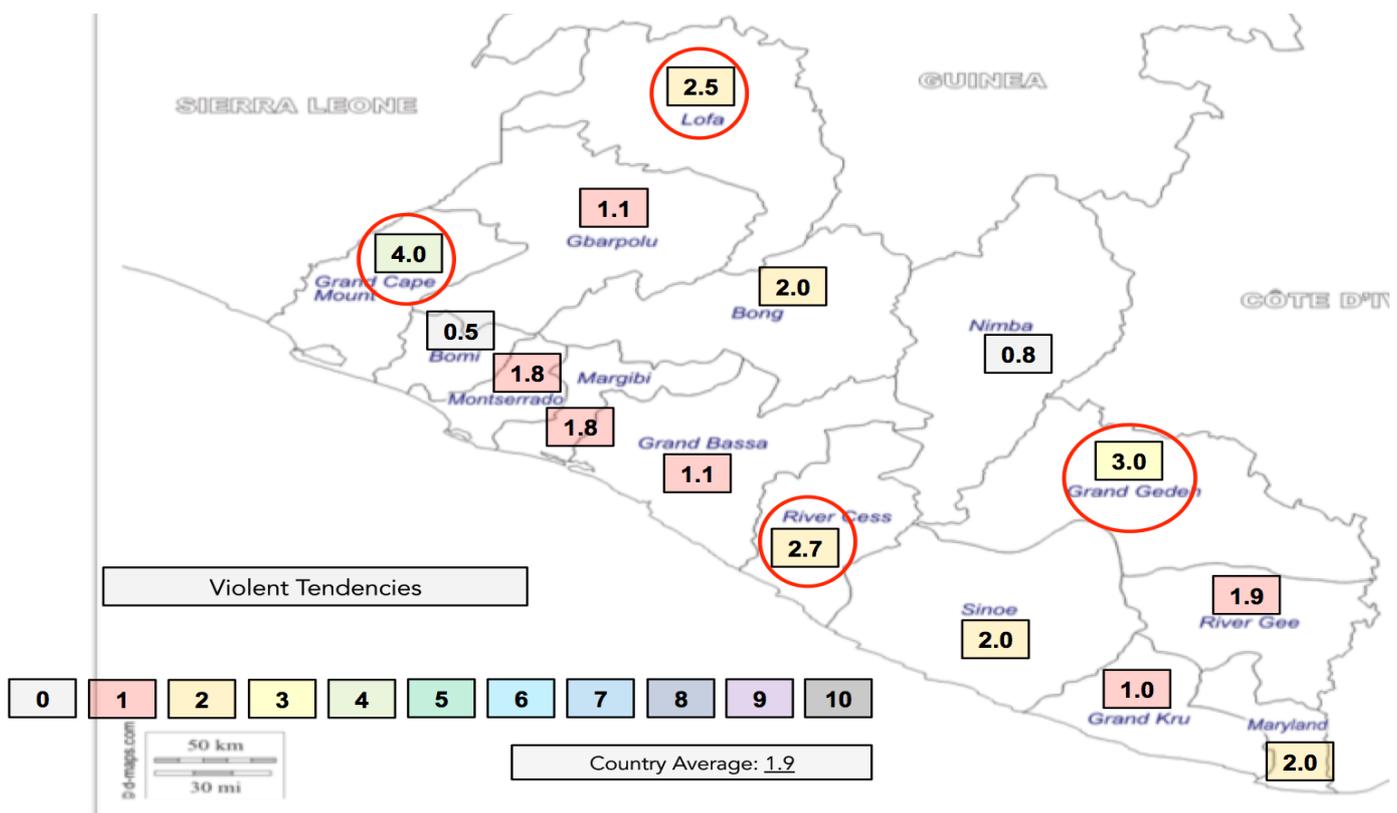


## SCORE LIBERIA DRAFT POLICY BRIEF

### Addressing Violent Tendencies

SCORE Liberia was launched in April 2016. Following the qualitative calibration of the methodology to the Liberian context, the quantitative fieldwork was completed in January 2017. The underlying objectives of the research are to understand the dimensions and indicators, and to collect empirical data relevant to the nature of social cohesion and coexistence in Liberia. SCORE can help identify hotspots, diagnose risks and understand the predictors of violence, which is of utmost importance at this current juncture, with the upcoming presidential elections and ongoing draw-down of UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

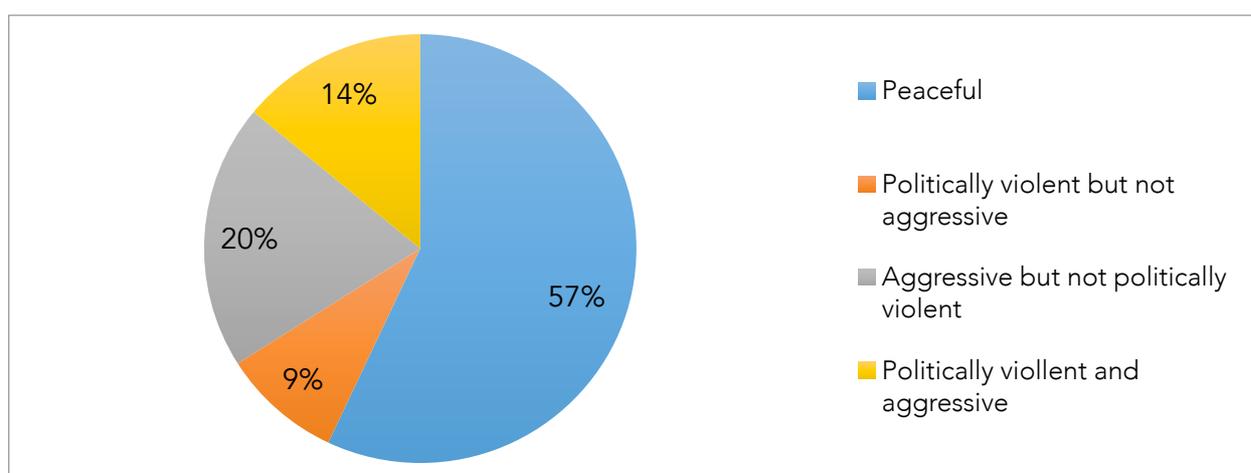
A key topic addressed by the survey is violent tendencies, which is valuable to study in order to better understand societal dynamics in a conflict-affected setting such as Liberia. The survey evaluates violent tendencies in terms of three components: (1) aggression by respondents in daily life, (2) their endorsement of political violence, and (3) their endorsement of sexual and gender based violence (S/GBV). The survey contains a question on each of these three components. Answers to these questions can be examined individually, as well as combined into an overall index of violent tendencies. The results reveal that the national average for the index of violent tendencies is 1.9 on a scale from 0 (no tendencies) to 10 (extreme tendencies). All things considered, this low score is relatively promising. Eliminating violence and orientations toward violence completely is difficult, especially in a society with a history of serious political violence, not to mention other types of violence in communities and households. Average scores vary significantly across counties, as seen in the heat map below. Four counties – Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, River Cess and Lofa – stand out as areas of concern (and therefore highlighted with red circles) due to average scores that are significantly above the national average.



Understanding what contributes to these elevated scores is vital in order to tailor appropriate and effective policies. Such a diagnosis can be achieved by examining responses to the survey questions about the three components of violent tendencies. These results are presented in the table below, comparing the four counties to the national averages. A striking finding is that the elevated scores for violent tendencies in the four counties are driven mainly by respondents engaging in aggression in daily life. In particular, the average level in Grand Cape Mount is alarming. Endorsement of S/GBV is also a contributing factor across at least three of the counties. The average score for this component in River Cess actually exceeds the average score for engaging in aggression in daily life. Lofa is the one county out of the four where the average score for endorsement of S/GBV is not significantly different from the national average. Meanwhile, endorsement of political violence is significantly above the national average in Grand Cape Mount and also elevated in Grand Gedeh, but below the national average in River Cess and Lofa.

County	Violent Tendencies (Average of 3 components)	Aggression in Daily Life	Sexual/Gender Based Violence	Political Violence Propensity
	Country Avg. 1.9	Avg. 2.7	Avg. 1.8	Avg. 1.3
Grand Gedeh	3.0	4.0	3.2	1.7
Grand Cape Mount	4.0	7.7	2.5	1.8
River Cess	2.7	3.2	3.9	1.1
Lofa	2.5	4.4	2.1	1.2
National Average	1.9	2.7	1.8	1.3

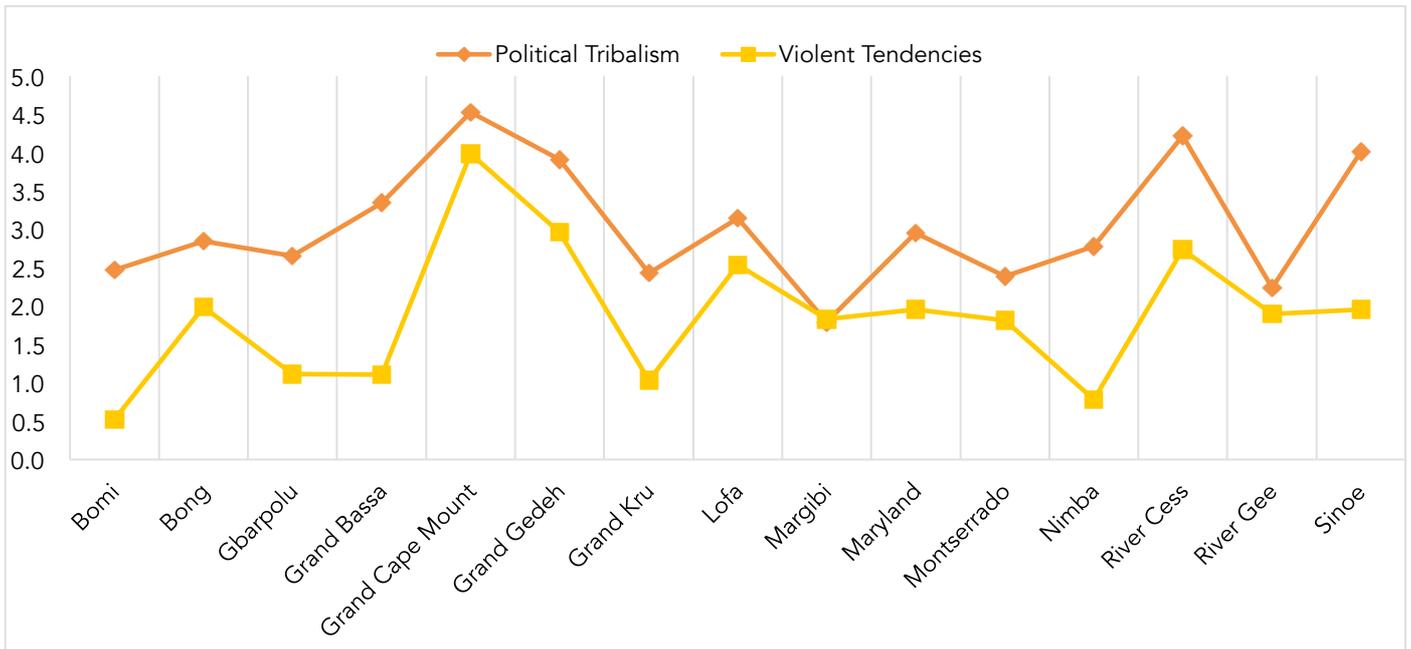
Overall, respondents can be differentiated into four groups with respect to their engagement in aggression in daily life and their endorsement of political violence – see the figure below. A majority of respondents can be considered non-violent on both counts (i.e., non-aggressive and averse to political violence). Yet one-fifth of respondents report daily aggression and also endorse political violence. The remainder exhibit one or the other violent tendency.



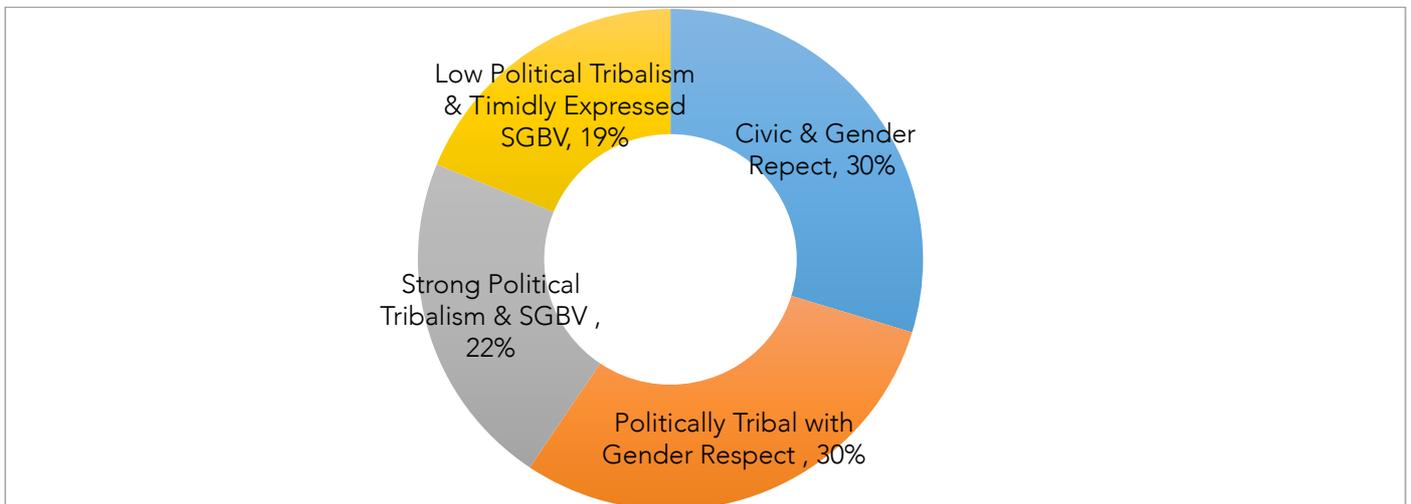
The findings also indicate a relationship between violent tendencies and political tribalism (see also the SCORE Liberia policy brief on political tribalism).<sup>1</sup> The figure below illustrates this relationship using

<sup>1</sup> The term tribalism can be broadly understood as referring to attitudes and behaviour that stem from strong loyalty to one's own ethno-linguistic group. SCORE research findings distinguish ethnic tribal identities from political tribalism. Although there is some

county-level averages for those two indicators. The correlation is especially strong with respect to S/GBV. This result is consistent with existing literature on conflict resolution, which shows a correspondence between patterns of violence observed at the macro level and tendencies around S/GBV measured at the micro level.



Of note, respondents can be differentiated into four groups with respect to their attitudes of political tribalism and their orientations toward S/GBV – see the figure below. The two largest groups are roughly the same size. One has low levels of political tribalism and aversion to S/GBV, and the other combines high levels of political tribalism and low levels of acceptance of S/GBV. A third, smaller group combines strong political tribalism with high levels of acceptance of S/GBV, and the fourth, smallest group combines weak political tribalism with moderate levels of acceptance of S/GBV.

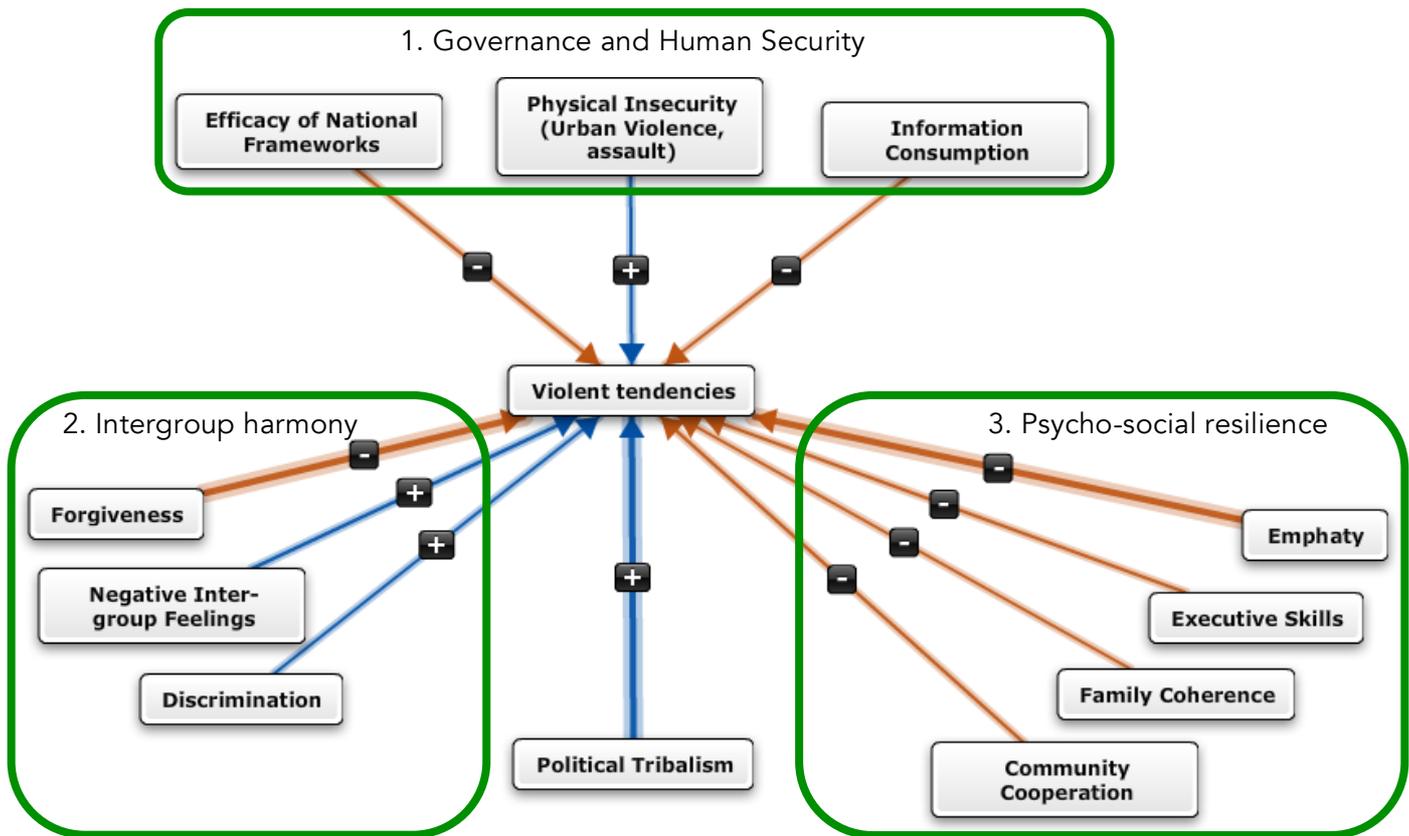


Political tribalism is not the only driver of violent tendencies. Younger generations appear to be more prone to aggression, possibly because of unemployment, disengagement, and exclusion. Stigma,

overlap, while ethnic tribalism is closely linked to ethnic identity, which is about etho-cultural belonging, political tribalism is about politicization of tribal identities that can lead to polarization and inter-tribal rivalries, and has a strong correlation with authoritarian political values. Specifically, political tribalism refers to loyalty to ‘tribal hierarchies and traditional way of life’ instead of ‘democratic governance structures and values’. Political tribalism indicator assesses attitudes towards and perceptions loyalty to tribal elders vs. central government, land reform and provision of justice and security.

displacement and socioeconomic disruption due to Ebola also seem to have a similar, hardening effect on individuals. On the other hand, the results indicate that women are less prone to aggression and endorsement of political violence than men.

Further analysis diagnosed four main groups of indicators that predict violent tendencies. The thickness of the arrows in the diagram below indicate the strength of the relationship: the thicker the arrow, the stronger the relationship. The colours of the arrows convey the nature of the relationship: blue arrows correspond to indicators that contribute to violent tendencies, whereas orange arrows correspond to indicators that impede violent tendencies. The SCORE team has prepared a separate policy brief on one factor: political tribalism. Therefore, the remainder of this brief focuses on the other three factors, placing specific emphasis on the combatting of gender-based violence and the enhancement of female empowerment to this effect.



Good Governance & Human Security: This factor relates to the political context in which people function. When individuals perceive the governance structures as corrupt, inefficient or inaccessible, or when they feel insecure in their daily lives, they are more likely to turn to informal networks or agents as providers of basic community services and security. Bad governance and human insecurity often shifts citizens’ loyalties and belonging away from national institutions. When democracy fails to deliver its promise of good governance, security and prosperity, democratic processes can become compromised. Under these conditions, citizens may react in frustration, turning to the authority of non-state actors, which will tend to increase the risk of violence. To combat these issues in the Liberian context, efforts should focus on improving institutional foundations and service delivery. The SCORE findings show that the efficacy of national frameworks (e.g., Governance Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, and County Peace Committees) has a strong inverse relationship with violence. Respondents who trust government and governance institutions and feel that they are representative, caring and non-corrupt, are less likely to resort to violence. The mechanisms detected in the survey data are respondents feeling heard, included, empowered, represented, and ultimately cared for. The results also reveal perceptions of human security

can be improved by combatting everyday crime and violence, through effective policing, and promoting free expression, and making open and vibrant media widely available and easily accessible to all citizens.

Intergroup harmony: This factor encompasses indicators about the relationships between individuals and groups in society that have a bearing on violent tendencies. Forgiveness is measured in terms of the extent to which individuals feel the way to resolve a dispute is by forgiving, rather than taking revenge. Greater levels of forgiveness are a sign that people have been able to overcome certain emotions associated with past violence, potentially enabling them to move on and be open to trusting others and working collectively to rebuild society. Intergroup proximity and trust reflect positive feelings towards others, whereby they cease to be viewed as threats, which contributes to the extent of peaceful coexistence in society. Reducing discriminatory practices and promoting a widespread sense of justice and inclusion can lessen levels of violence and ultimately promote reconciliation and social cohesion.

Psychosocial resilience: People with the capacity to respond and adapt constructively to challenges are less likely to possess violent traits. Key indicators include empathy (the ability to place oneself in another’s position, to understand their perspective and/or feel what the other person is experiencing), executive skills (the ability to master thoughts and impulses, and the ability to plan for one’s future), family coherence (bonds, understanding and loyalty) and community cooperation (working together to solve a community problem or benefit the community) are all strong inhibitors of violent tendencies.

### Policy Recommendations

The most effective way of addressing violent tendencies is to ensure effective and efficient allocation of resources by identifying policy entry points with the highest likelihood of impact and focusing on areas of the country that present the greatest concerns. Matching the key policy entry points with the national and county-level analysis can help tailor efforts to where the need is strongest. In the short and medium term, the SCORE predictive analysis reveals that focusing on good governance, effective security provision (e.g. policing) and improving human security would be policy entry points with the highest likelihood of positive impact that can help address violent tendencies. For the medium term, focusing on promoting community cooperation, and in the long run, policies aimed promoting inclusive education experiences, incorporating peace education, and improving social healing processes as well as developing executive skills could be incorporated into programming and strategies.

Policy Entry Points	Recommendations
Human security	<p>Improve policing and the effective treatment of victims of violence, through measures such as training and awareness-raising among security and health professionals, as well as legal advice counseling, especially for SGBV victims, perpetrators and those suffering from PTSD. Such work could build on the existing expertise and social capacity within NGOs, women’s networks and local religious institutions.</p> <p>Reinforce the sense of justice and trust in justice institutions to reduce the continued impunity of suspects, which significantly undermines confidence in civic institutions. Effective strategies could include more robust and rapid implementation of existing legal frameworks; increased and improved cooperation between civil society, local communities and security institutions (e.g., police); greater promotion of community policing; and public crime reports.</p> <p>Develop and deploy preventive measures, such as neighbourhood watches and early warning systems (with regular monitoring and reporting protocols), in the counties (River Cess, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh and Lofa) exhibiting elevated violent tendencies.</p>

Efficacy of National Frameworks	<p>Ensure sustainability of decentralized government systems and structures and develop grassroots participation and engagement mechanisms for the implementation of the National Frameworks (Land Commission; Decentralization Policy; Governance Commission; Anti-Corruption Commission; Agenda for Transformation; Reconciliation Roadmap; Justice and Security Regional Hubs; District and County Security Councils; County Peace Committees). These needs are most pronounced in the counties with elevated violent tendencies.</p> <p>More specifically, almost 80% in Sinoe and 90% in Grand Cape Mont report that Anti-Corruption Commission, Agenda for Transformation and Reconciliation Roadmap have not helped to strengthen peace and state building; over 90% in River Cess report that Anti-Corruption Commission has not helped; above 70% in Sinoe report that Decentralization Policy and Governance Commission have not helped; and almost 90% in Grand Cape Mount report that Land Commission has not helped to strengthen peace and state building.</p>
Information consumption	<p>Increase availability and diversity of media outlets, working on improving freedom of the press, as well as media and digital literacy among the general public, to enhance civic identity and active citizenship. Specific target counties: Sinoe, River Cess, Grand Cape Mount, Nimba, Lofa, River Gee.</p>
Intergroup harmony, forgiveness and anti-discrimination	<p>Invest in dialogue and healing processes to help address perceptions of intergroup threat, negative stereotypes, and discriminatory attitudes, thereby improving intergroup relations and harmony; Build capacity for nonviolent communication and healing processes, to reduce intergroup threat and foster forgiveness both at an individual and societal level; Incorporate peace education into curricula; At a higher policy level, adopt public narratives that endorse forgiveness; Initiatives aimed at improving intergroup relations should primarily focus on reconciling Mandigos, Gios and other groups, including Muslims; with more intensified reconciliation efforts tailored for Grand Cape Mount and Sinoe.</p>
Executive skills	<p>Incorporate age-appropriate activities, games and exercises into education, starting from kindergarten level to adolescence, that foster positive behaviour and allow individuals to make healthy life choices, by developing working memory (the ability to hold information in mind and use it); inhibitory control (the ability to master thoughts and impulses to resist temptations, distractions, and habits); and cognitive flexibility (the capacity to adjust to changing demands, priorities, or perspectives). The design of this educational programming should reference international best practices such as the guide published by Harvard University; and Tie international donations and relevant means of support to these objectives. Educational approaches focused on executive skill development should be especially constructive in River Gee, Maryland, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Bassa, Lofa, Grand Gedeh, Gbarpolu and Margibi.</p>
Community cooperation	<p>Promote local risk-sharing arrangements, including community-based insurance schemes and access to local resources, local health education and health care services, technical and financial assistance for farmer and artisan cooperatives, collective labour action, vocational training and community access to microfinancing; Tie international donations to this objective and in conjunction provide foreign expertise for further capacity building. These approaches aimed at enhancing community cooperation should be emphasized for Maryland, Grand Cape Mount, Lofa and River Gee.</p>
Promote the political empowerment of women	<p>Women are less prone to violence and corruption, and have a stronger desire for reconciliation. Women are also perceived more trustworthy than their male counterparts and will usually tolerate human right abuses much less than men would, allowing much less room for civil conflict and intra-state trouble to spring to life. Thus,</p>

policies should aim to increase the supply and demand of suitable female candidates for elected offices and government appointments; Provide women with the required education, media access and financial assistance to compete successfully for these political positions; Introduce temporary affirmative measures of a minimum ratio of 30% women in top political positions, as a means to achieve the critical mass necessary for social change to eventually trickle down to society.

**About the SCORE Index:** The SCORE Index was originally developed by SeeD in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with funding from USAID. The tool supports policy decisions for national and international stakeholders and is particularly suited for post-conflict, multi-ethnic societies that now face peacebuilding and state-building challenges. By examining social cohesion and reconciliation, the SCORE Index aims to identify and analyse the factors that underpin peace in a society - as needed in order to better inform and evaluate intervention programs. Thus far, versions of the SCORE Index have been implemented in Cyprus (2013, 2014 and 2015), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013), Nepal (2014), Ukraine (2015-ongoing), Liberia (2017), and Moldova (2017-ongoing).

**About SeeD:** SeeD is a peacebuilding think tank, originally with a regional scope, that uses participatory research to support international organizations, local policymakers, stakeholders, and peace practitioners to develop, implement and monitor targeted efforts towards social cohesion and reconciliation. SeeD specializes in the development of innovative quantitative methodologies, such as Participatory Polling and the SCORE Index, which seek to understand the underlying social dynamics of conflict and its transformation for use in peacebuilding contexts.

 More information can be found at SCORE Online Platform: [www.scoreforpeace.org](http://www.scoreforpeace.org).

The SCORE Index in Liberia has been implemented in partnership between SeeD, UNMIL and UNDP. The fieldwork was conducted by Search for Common Ground (project manager: Aaron Weah, Director of Liberia Country Office) with invaluable support from Anu Kulkarni (Stanford University) and David Backer (University of Maryland) as collaborators in the design of the survey and questionnaire. University of Liberia also provided USIP funding supported for the project.