



WOMEN, ! OH WOMEN !

STORIES OF LIBERIAN WOMEN & POWER



WHEN WOMEN ARE IN LEADERSHIP, THEY KNOW
HOW TO HELP THEIR COMMUNITY.

WHEN WOMEN MAKE DECISIONS,
THEY BRING DEVELOPMENT.

WHEN WOMEN ARE IN THE HOUSE, THEY WILL
TALK ABOUT HOSPITALS AND SCHOOLS.

WOMEN, OH WOMEN!

STORIES OF LIBERIAN WOMEN & POWER

This booklet contains the stories of 14 women from Bong and Montserrado Counties, Liberia. These women have been part of a project that ZOA and ABIC have been implementing since 2021*. Our project revolves around the conviction that women’s involvement in decision-making and leadership is key to sustainable peace and welfare.

As Korto, one of our participants, described;

*“When women are in leadership, they know how to help their community.
When women make decisions, they bring development.
When women are in the House, they will talk about hospitals and schools.”*

In this booklet, 14 women reflect on the most significant changes they experienced in their lives as a result of their participation in the project, which aimed to establish a more conducive environment for inclusive leadership and decision-making. Together, the stories offer a glimpse of the various areas of life that are impacted by women’s agency; families are healthier, more children go to school, violence reduces, and incomes increase. The stories also portray that investing in equality does not only change the lives of women, but also that of their families, their communities, and eventually the entire society. When women are supported and empowered, everyone wins.

We hope you will be inspired by our storytellers.



*The project is titled “Sustainable and inclusive peace in Liberia through promoting women’s leadership and participation in civic and political life and their strengthened role in conflict resolution”. It is implemented by ZOA Liberia in cooperation with The Angie Brooks International Centre (ABIC) for Women’s Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security, with funding from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund (UNPBF).

In the project, we used Appreciative Inquiry (AI) as our approach. AI is a strengths-based, positive approach to development and change. Rather than focusing on minimizing weaknesses, AI redirects our attention to what is working – and how we can do more of that. It focuses on identifying the existing strengths of individuals and communities and building on those strengths to reach specific goals. Throughout the process, participants initiate concrete steps toward their desired future.



PAUL PANTŌE NAJUE

PEACEBUILDING PROGRAMME COORDINATOR, ZOA

I believe in a world of equal opportunity and inclusive participation for all. The empowerment of women and girls and their participation in decision-making and conflict resolution at the community level is a positive and necessary step in the right direction for any nation. To eradicate gender barriers and end discrimination, women, girls, and marginalized groups should be at the vanguard of all decision-making. This is why ZOA and Angie Brooks International (ABIC), in collaboration with four local women's organizations, continue to protect and advance the rights of women and girls in Liberia.

For Liberia's development to be sustainable, it needs to be inclusive. This project is supporting some of the most vulnerable groups, rural women, to be included in decision-making processes in their communities in Montserrado and Bong Counties. When women and girls realize their goals, whether it is growing a business, improving their home, or investing in training or education, they are more resilient and better able to provide for themselves and their families. In this booklet, you will find examples of communities that have appointed female town chiefs, paramount chiefs, or other leadership positions for the first time in history. Such developments are essential to a more inclusive society where true peace and reconciliation can prosper.

Many thanks to the United Nations Peace Building Fund (UNPBF) for supporting this project financially. We encourage everyone, including the government and partners, to continue changing the world by supporting women's empowerment.



GBEME HORACE-KOLIE

SENIOR PROJECT OFFICER, ZOA

Outstanding for me in the UNPBF project has been to witness how the male dominant leadership structures in local communities have started to realize that a community is productive and progressive when decision-making becomes inclusive and participatory. The improved perceptions of women's leadership have really outshined the cultural walls that stopped women's inclusion and participation in their communities' decision-making processes, as proven by the decrease in bullying that women face today.

The self-determined change approach reduced women's fear and made them active about what matters to their wellbeing and how they can contribute to their communities. In identifying and appreciating the women's strengths, they began envisioning new possibilities to define their futures in creative and innovative ways.

What is important to mention, too, is that during the project implementation, women became increasingly aware that female leadership is the gateway for women to have a voice at the decision-making table, which promotes an equitable society. Beyond seeking to change the perception of inclusiveness in decision-making and leadership, the project also strengthened social cohesion among group members. This resulted in many community-based initiatives that benefit communities and has been a vital tool for peacebuilding.



GARWOLO FRANCIS KORTE

MEAL OFFICER, ZOA

I am very delighted that the women from Bong and Montserrado who participated in the project are now full of confidence to vie for leadership. Before the project, women were politically marginalized as cultural practices prohibited their participation in leadership and decision-making. Women were typically restricted to being submissive and obedient to their husbands. However, as a MEAL officer, I have witnessed a lot of change over time. Women are now actively participating on both the civil and the political levels.

ANNIE FLOMO



LOCATION

Blameyea Town, Bong County



TOPICS

Political participation, community peace



We have about 35 houses here in our town, and when we learned that women should be part of decision-making, I became the first female assistant town chief. Today, if anyone is making palava*, I will be the first to go there, and I tell them: "you're not supposed to treat a sister like this! As women, we are supposed to be together!"

Before the project, people would not listen if I tried to intervene. They would take their issues to court, to the law. But now, we know that we, as a community, are the law. Instead of taking our issues to court, we can talk here and understand one another.

Last month, two women were fighting with each other in the middle of the town - they were yelling insults at each other. Other townspeople noticed the fight, and they quickly called me over. I went to the site and told the fighting women that they could not insult their fellow

sisters. They listened to me and broke up their fight! Later, when they cooled down, I called them over to my house to talk. We sat outside in front of my house, and I asked them, "what is the problem here? Why are you insulting each other?" Both of them explained their side, and I reasoned with them. They listened to me and understood because the trainers had already spoken with them about togetherness and women empowerment. So since they had that understanding, we could resolve the issue much quicker. They went home, and everything has been fine between them ever since.

I feel fine when such things happen. The project made me know who I am within the community. When there was fighting in the town, I used to say, "this is none of my business." But now, my fellow women will tell me that I am supposed to do something, and it makes me proud to have influence.

*MAKING PALAVA = arguing, fighting with someone



**"AS WOMEN, WE ARE SUPPOSED
TO BE TOGETHER!"**

JULENNE NUSHANN



LOCATION

Millionaire Quarter, Bong County



TOPICS

Community initiatives and advocacy, anti-corruption, female leadership, self-determination



As a person with disability (PWD), I was very shy and felt too ashamed to talk to people. In my community, people did not recognize the worth of PWDs. But I got to know that I am important and I can make an impact on society. Now, I am proud to go out and voice my opinion.

We, the women in this community, learned to take our rightful place in society. This representation is crucial because it allows us to advocate for issues that affect us. For example, women continue working throughout their pregnancy because there is no law to protect them. But if other countries pass bills for maternity leave, why not us? And there is much more. Our women die in the hospital because of electricity issues; our children get into the criminal circuit; we see men abandoning their families. All of this is because there is not enough female representation. We, the women, know the problems we face and what the consequences feel like. If you go to the House of Representatives, women are not represented there. As a result, issues that affect women have been downplayed. So we want to get into the house of representatives so our voice will be heard in this country.

Electing female leaders is challenging, however. During election time, it is common for leaders to buy votes by offering people food. I was part of this; I would vote for leaders who gave me something. But I have been learning about what good leadership looks like. A good

leader is transparent, is not corrupt, and will listen to the voice of all people. So for the 2023 elections, I will not vote any corrupt leaders into power. Instead, we should elect leaders based on the structural improvements they can bring to our communities. I share this message with everyone around me; we should elect leaders that work for us.

People can give me a tough time for being vocal because not everyone is ready to accept a female PWD speaking out. But I am patient with them. I keep explaining to them the importance of women entering politics, and I win people over in the end. I feel good, and I am thankful for coming this far. I used to fear people would laugh at me, but I am confident now.

I dream of becoming the zonal head because the current head is retiring. When elected, I will ensure every little fund is used for the intended purpose. We will look at our single mothers and disadvantaged children and establish laws that benefit our community and progress development. Let decision-making be inclusive. Let us get at the table.




**I AM IMPORTANT AND
I CAN MAKE AN IMPACT ON SOCIETY**

**I AM PROUD TO GO OUT AND
VOICE MY OPINION**



BEATRICE DENNIS

 **LOCATION**
Jennepleta, Bong County

 **TOPICS**
Justice and security, female leadership, civic participation



If our mothers had known about this program, they could not have been left behind, and consequently, we could have received an education. But until recently, men made all the decisions and did not allow women to be among them. When the men held their meetings, women went to work on the farm. Even if I asked my husband, he would say, “the meetings are none of your concern, take your load and go to the farm”. Women’s participation in leadership simply was not known – but it is crucial. When we, the women, contribute our talents, it makes us proud of ourselves.

In this region, we have the Community Watch Forum (CWF). It is a supporting body to the police in communities where no police are present. We are trained to handle cases in their absence. The CWF needed people in our community to join, but no one volunteered. That is when my chair lady proposed for me to take the job. Initially, I was worried. A woman like me should do community work? Who am I? But I decided to do it for the town’s sake, and at this point, I handle more cases than the town chief. We have about eleven Watchers, and I am the only female.

Two weeks ago, a boy heavily abused a girl. In the middle of the night, the town chief ran to my house and told me he needed my help. When I arrived at the scene, I called the police to order the boy’s arrest, and that is when the boy fled. No one could find him. At some point, I went to the forest. It was almost like God was leading me because when I got there, I flashed my light and suddenly saw the boy under the banana bush. I called him out, told my guys to handcuff him, and turned him over to the police. After the girl recovered, her family called me and thanked me.

Initially, my daughter did not want me to take the job because she worried people would disrespect me. But now that she sees me being called to meetings, handling cases, and being consulted before any judgments are made, she is proud. We, the women, want to see change. We have men here who have spent many years in power, and nothing has happened. That is why we want female leadership in this town so that we can start making a difference. Women understand each other’s grievances and will fight for improvement. I do everything without fear because I know I am doing it for the sake of my women.



BECAUSE I KNOW I AM DOING IT
FOR THE SAKE OF MY WOMEN.

JULIE DOLO



LOCATION

Gbelekpalai, Bong County



TOPICS

Civic participation, conflict resolution, shared decision-making, education promotion



There used to be a lot of conflict in our community. Land disputes were a major source. We do not buy land in this area, but the leaders give us land and demarcate our house spot. If one person crosses their borders and plants crops on another person's land, a fight can erupt and get violent. But throughout the project, people here have learned how to talk about conflict, and the violence has dropped. The land is neither yours nor mine, but it is God's, so let us live in peace. The community has become stable.

In my own home, my husband and I would fight daily, especially about tuition payments. When one of our children was put out of school because their tuition had not been paid, my husband would just shrug and say he doesn't have money. When it was time to cook, he would say he didn't have money for food. He would tell me just to stop bothering him. But both of us have learned about communication and responsibility. He now assists in paying for the children's school fees and brings money for food, and we live in peace.

Another change is that women and men now work together. Before, we would organize cleaning campaigns where everyone was supposed to stay home and clean up the town. But in practice, only the women would stay and do the cleaning work. These days, however, women can tell men, "this is what we are supposed to do," and they will stand by it, and it will be done.

My dream is for women to take higher seats in the town. We have a female assistant town chief, but I want a female general town chief. When you are a general town chief, you control the entire town. When a woman has power, she will think about her children, and she will build society.



MARY SONAH



LOCATION

Gbelekpalai, Bong County



TOPICS

Female leadership, community initiatives and advocacy, self-determination



I never attended meetings because women never used to be in power. Women did not speak out, and men would not listen to our ideas. We would be afraid because we were told no woman should come to a place of decision-making. But now, we are in power, and we are free. I changed, and the town changed too. You see the grass over there? Tomorrow we will get together and cut it. When women tell men to do something, they will listen to us and do it. Even the town chief listens to our concerns now.

I have become assistant town chief. I talk to the women and organize activities that help us. We have made a vegetable garden, done community cleaning campaigns, and started a money-saving system. We, the women, make a difference. The community building we are sitting in right now was built because I advocated for it. As a result, we can host community meetings and events in

a suitable space. I advocated for two volunteer teachers to get a salary, and now they are on government pay. The road to our community is paved because a woman advocated for it. That is why women need to be in power; women have ideas that improve life for everyone. We need to work together with men, walking side by side. That way, change can really occur. Women in power will listen to the concerns of other women.

Next, I want to start working on building a clinic here. We have over four thousand people in this town, but we don't have a clinic. Without transportation, pregnant women sometimes need to be carried in a hammock for long distances before reaching a clinic, which is very risky. Safer maternity care is one of my priorities. And I don't ask for money for my services to the community. My name is Bretha, which means 'free' in my Kpelleh dialect. The work I do for others is free.



**BUT NOW, WE ARE IN POWER, AND
WE ARE FREE**

KPONTŌE D. RENNIE



LOCATION

Suakoko, Bong County



TOPICS

Female leadership, political participation, self-determination



Before the project started, women didn't have the tools to participate in leadership. But now, we are bold. I am contesting for Vice President for the National Women in Liberia for the Lutheran Church. I decided to run for a leadership position because I know the needs women in my community have, and I believe I can advocate for them.

A man will advocate for what benefits *him*. But a woman understands what pregnancy and delivery are like, and she will make plans for maternity centers.

At first, women were shy and did not speak out. We would feel inferior and say, "who am I to go and stand before that person who knows their book?*". Over the last months, I have learned to speak in front of people. When I went for the elections, the house was packed with people. And I stood in front of them and delivered my speech. People never expected that and were very impressed.

My dream for this town is that at least 70-80% of positions will be occupied by women because we have potential and are ready.

*KNOWING BOOK = being educated, literate



I KNOW THE NEEDS WOMEN IN MY
COMMUNITY HAVE, AND I BELIEVE
I CAN ADVOCATE FOR THEM.

KORTO G. DARPOLOR



LOCATION

Millionaire Quarter, Bong County



TOPICS

Education promotion, self-determination, community initiatives and advocacy



Before the project came into the community, only men were in leadership. Then the project came, and we learned that women are just as qualified. When the men took all the positions, the women sat behind, which is what was happening; the women stayed home and cared for the children, and the men went out to do the rest. In this community, all decisions were made by men. But now, we have female quarter chiefs, and we see to it that women are running for positions. Personally, I have learned that I can hold any position. I am capable and can even run to be a representative or senator.

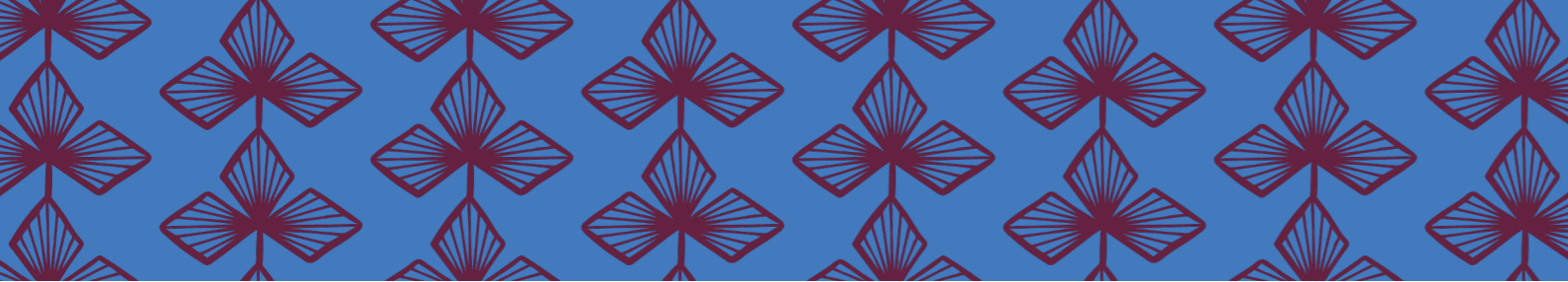
When women are in leadership, they know how to help their community. When women are in leadership, they bring development. I, myself, want to work with the children of this community. Some don't go to school, have left their homes, and are involved in drugs and stealing. There is a spot here where those children get together. Sometimes, we, the women, go there to talk to them. We bring some food, sit among them, and chat - we point to the future and explain what will become of them when they continue with that lifestyle. And I am sure that if we

keep talking to them and visiting them, they will leave the alcohol, drugs, and stealing. That is the power that we have. Calling the police on them will not help long-term, but women are mothers. When we see those children, we think of the future.

We also want to support parents. If we are organized and we all contribute something small, we can help the families that can't afford tuition. We can work with the children and their families and encourage them to return to school. Women can organize so many things to help the community and the country.

My dream is for the community to be a better area and for my fellow women to lead without fear. The only reason women were not in decision-making is that our parents told us that only men could lead. But those were their perceptions - that is how they felt, but it is not like that now. What men can do, women can do. Yes, women can hold positions in any organization and any institution. Women are strong. They work on things and say things, and those things will happen.





ANONYMOUS



TOPICS

Justice and security, self-determination, community initiatives and advocacy

We need women to bring justice. In our nation, so many women are abused, and the abusers go free because the people in higher positions are not advocating for us. We've had several rape cases in this community where the perpetrators bribed the judges and got away. You know, if the victim and their family do not have money, their case will be forwarded until it dies down. When men are the only authority in judging, they will dismiss gender-based violence cases. But now, this doesn't happen anymore. The women and the female leaders will stand and ensure that the perpetrator will bear the consequences.

We had a case very recently. The victim's parents took the case to the judges, but they were continuously told to go and come back another time. That is when the women

leaders gathered and said, "we cannot sit and look at this; enough is enough." They got involved in helping the parents, and the perpetrator was put in prison. Women advocate for each other and for justice.

Two years ago, a lady died of the consequences of gender-based violence. The judges took the case, but the perpetrators escaped. Since the victim's mother did not have money, no one could defend her. Then, the women stood up and had a demonstration here. It wasn't easy, but the female leaders stood in that case, and the perpetrator was brought to light. Today, he is in jail for life. Had it been left with the men, the case would have died down there. But the women stood up and said, "we need justice" – and justice was given.



MARTHA FLOMO



LOCATION

Duta, Bong County



TOPICS

Female leadership, conflict resolution, community initiatives and advocacy



I was not used to standing among other people and talking to them. But now, I am the assistant town chief. People can bring their cases to me, and I judge them in a way that both parties will be satisfied. I can speak to anyone; people who have wronged me and people who are good to me. I have become very open.

As town chief, I can bring people together to clean the town or to make a vegetable garden. With the women's group, we can all collect some money and help someone that is sick. When someone sues another, I will talk to them and settle the case.

Recently, a lady told me that one of her neighbors was scolding her. I called both the women, and we talked. They

are friends now; their children play and eat together. This is important because when people are united, they can work together. When you and your neighbor can't speak together, can't eat together, can't even follow the same road, then what will come of development? But when people are united, they can put their hands together.

I feel great because I can use my talents to do good for this town. And the town respects my leadership. My mother used to teach me, "when you are among the old people, and you respect them, that is how their respect will be behind you, and wherever you go, somebody will respect you." I have lived by that, and the elders are so happy about my leadership. In fact, they are the ones that encouraged me to do it.



**I FEEL GREAT BECAUSE I CAN
USE MY TALENTS
TO DO GOOD
FOR THIS TOWN.**

VIOLA PEWUEE



LOCATION

Duta, Bong County



TOPICS

Female leadership, conflict resolution, self-determination, health and well-being



We, the women, have started to discover our importance and the roles we can play in our homes and community. We learned how to care for our community and how to lead. We shouldn't be afraid to talk among men. Many of us never knew how to express our feelings, even among our friends, but by now, I can even speak in front of large crowds.

I never attended community meetings before, but since I have become assistant town chief, I have participated in every session. I'm not afraid to sit among the men anymore. In fact, I can be the first to be there, and I will wait for them to join me. In meetings, women contribute unique ideas based on the problems we face. For example, we can be vulnerable to infections, so we advise the men on how to build latrines hygienically. Or we advocate for the handpump to be cleaned because we are the ones that fetch the water. The children will be protected from malaria and diarrhea when we have safe water and latrines. So those are some of our contributions.

As part of my leadership, I can advocate for women and children. Sometimes, pregnant women tell me their men refuse to give them money to plan for the baby. Men thought, "as long as you don't see the child, you don't

have to buy things for them." They just saw it from their own perspective. But we learned that when a woman gets pregnant, she should start saving money for the baby from day one. So I will sit down with the men and explain that they should give their pregnant women money, take them to the hospital for check-ups, and save money for the baby. That way, when the contractions start, they will be financially prepared. And, by the grace of God, the men follow my advice.

Last week, a woman came to me and told me that her man would not give her money for food. He would wake up and go to the farm without providing for the family first. So I called them, and they explained their sides of the story to me. And I peacefully explained to the man that he has a responsibility in the home. And if he brings in some money, his woman will add her own money to it, cook for the children, and they will be satisfied. They listened, and both were happy and have been working together since.

I feel so fine and happy because I never knew the importance of myself as a woman. I used to stay away from community problems and would not speak up about anything, but now I can settle issues – even for others.

**I'M NOT AFRAID
TO SIT AMONG THE MEN ANYMORE.**



NYAMAH GEORGE



LOCATION

Blameyea, Bong County



TOPICS

Civic participation, self-determination, conflict resolution



We have a female town chief in our community for the very first time. She advocates for the interests of women and makes sure there is justice for us. Past leadership never judged cases that were not in their interest. Moreover, we women get together and bring new ideas for improvement. We have been working on a latrine and hope to finish it tomorrow.

In my home, my children were always arguing. Two brothers would try to sue each other, and even a husband and wife could take each other to court. But in training, we learned about family unity and resolving conflicts through talking. My family is happier now because we settle our issues together, and nobody is suing anyone anymore.

The problem with suing others is that it is costly. If a lady goes to Gbarnga to sue her boyfriend, maybe for persistent non-support, the police will charge her for their transportation costs, which is LD\$3000*. So when they

come to arrest this man, LD\$3000 is gone. If the man admits he is not supporting his partner due to a lack of money, they will put him in jail. He will be there for the longest time if he does not have a family to bail him out. In the meantime, the family will become vulnerable and food insecure. If you have children and spend the last money on court bills, you will be out of money for the week.

I think we realized that suing our brothers is a waste of resources. Instead, I can sit with my brother, tell him about my issues, and discuss how to move forward. This has been a precious lesson for our community. My daughter wanted to go to Gbarnga to sue her boyfriend, and I convinced her to return. She listened, and we all sat around the table to resolve the issues, and now she and her boyfriend are doing well. Gradually, other community members see the changes and want to join. Everybody wants to do the training because they witness the impact on our lives; they see the improvements and the togetherness.

*3,000 LIBERIAN DOLLARS = 20 United States Dollars



MARY JOE



LOCATION

Blameyea, Bong County



TOPICS

Civic participation, health and well-being, education promotion, conflict resolution



My kids never listened to me, which was a struggle for me. In the project meetings, we were encouraged to share our confrontations with our children, and together we would find solutions. So I started applying all I had learned from those discussions at home. You know, fire can't cut off fire* – so if my child is angry, I don't respond with anger. I just stay calm and tell them, "this is not the way, this is how we should live, and this is what we should do."

Early marriage, teenage pregnancy, and substance abuse are common in our area. As a community, we want to fight against these things; we don't want our children to get involved. My way of battling these issues is to talk to my children every day. This daily counseling guides them and keeps them on the right path. I point to young adults who grew up in this town and became successful. I will tell my children, "you see this person? He lived here and never participated in drinking, and now he is excelling out there. Now he is a director, a minister. So abandon the alcohol, and you can become a minister or a director". It is

a gradual process; it takes daily talking. If you want a child to change and improve, you must invest and keep going.

One of my adult sons lives in Monrovia. He smokes and drinks and never used to call us. But someone convinced him to visit us, and he recently spent two weeks with me. During this time, I kept talking with him. And since he has returned to Monrovia, he has been calling me. In fact, he is coming back to our town in the coming days to spend the season here. I believe he is changing gradually. Before, he would never even call us, but the fact that he will now come for a prolonged period is a signal of change.

It makes me happy to see stability and peace in my household. My dream is for my children to get to the top in education. My children can get any job they wish for when they are well-educated. But I worry about the children in this community who do not attend school. When my generation is no longer around, they will take over. And if they are not educated, how will the community be?



**YOU
KNOW, FIRE CAN'T CUT OFF FIRE
SO IF MY CHILD IS ANGRY,
I DON'T RESPOND WITH ANGER.**

*FIRE CAN'T CUT OFF FIRE = an argument between two fighting parties can only be resolved if one person calms down

CECILIA NGUQUOI



LOCATION

Carreyburg West Point, Montserrado County



TOPICS

Shared decision-making, education promotion, earning capacity, self-determination



I used to burn coal for a living. It was a tough job, so I learned how to make a living out of my vegetable garden with ZOA. Selling my crops provides me with an income and is better for my health. But the most important is that I learned how to talk with others through the project. I was used to being quiet, standing back, and letting my husband handle everything. When I met other women in the street, I would greet them, but I never discussed much. But when I joined the project, I started learning how to express myself. I was so afraid initially, but everyone was encouraged to speak in those meetings. And when I finally talked, all the women clapped and cheered for me, making me so happy! I used to think I had no right to speak because I don't know book*. But they said, "just because you don't know book doesn't mean you can't participate. Maybe the ideas in your mind can help your whole community – you must speak your mind!".

Now, we women take part in decisions, and we can express our likes and dislikes. The men cannot decide on everything anymore. If something is important for us, and we are with 16 women, we can make it happen. Today, if the men say, "we are not buying the cocoa," and there are

women present, we can say, "no! we want cocoa! We have to buy it!". The men cannot ignore us anymore. Together, we women have a chance.

It made an impact in my home, too. Sometimes, my husband and I would not have enough money for food or school fees. Before, it would not occur to me to share my ideas with him. I was so used to just sitting and him making every decision. But nowadays, I have my garden, and I make money. So when there is not enough money for the children's school, I contribute with my money and ideas. I tell my husband, "I have my LD\$10 here; I can help you". So there is no palava* around school fees anymore. Before, I would sit there and just ask the man, "how will the child go to school?" and he would have all the authority. But now, I work towards the fees. He brings in 100 Liberian dollars, I add 50, and the child will go.

My children see the changes too. Last night, my daughter said, "ma, I want to become town chief! I want to become quarter chief!". I tell God, "thank you. Our children will be better".

*NOT KNOWING BOOK = not being able to read or write

*PALAVA = arguing



AND WHEN I FINALLY TALKED,
ALL THE WOMEN CLAPPED
AND CHEERED FOR ME,
MAKING ME SO HAPPY!



ANONYMOUS



TOPICS

Female leadership, self-determination

I got to know my value and role as a woman. At first, I didn't know my value, but today, I know I have equal rights with men. If I want to become a leader, nothing can stop me – I have all the rights. Even if I don't know book*, I can serve because I have talents!

We have a women's group in our village, and we needed a head to lead the group. I knew I wanted to do it when I heard about the position. Before, I would have said, "I don't want to lead, I'm not able, and people will talk." But after I learned a lot in training, I knew I could serve the group and didn't need to listen to what people say. If I do a good job, people will see for themselves. After I decided I wanted to run, I still had to convince the people to vote for me. I told the group, "this group is to help each other. If there is anything, you can discuss it with me. I'm not too proud or big to listen to you." Because I knew that that is what the people wanted in a leader. Some leaders don't want to listen to the people once elected, but that is not who I want to be.

Last November, the election finally came. I was running against a man. When the facilitator asked those in favor of me to raise their hands, almost all hands went up, and I won the vote! When I became the leader, it felt very good. It meant that I had learned something and that I could apply it. I came home and told my husband I wanted to become a leader. He said, "you're a woman; what makes you think you can become a leader!?" and I said, "Well, I already did it. The only thing you can do is support me".

Still, it can be hard to lead as a woman. Men are used to always seeing their women behind them, so sometimes, they don't feel too good about these changes. It can be difficult. We, women, learn, but the men's minds are still closed. It can cause fights. Their mindset is to control the women – they can do whatsoever they want to us. Some of them don't want to see their wife in leadership. Even when I started to go to the training, my husband tried to stop me and said, "the place is so far; why are you leaving your children? Why are you going there?" And I said, "but how will I just sit and just depend on you? Even if I want something for myself, I can't get it". After I started going to the training, I was employed. My husband lost his job a while later, so I became the breadwinner. And that was the only time I could make my husband understand the value of my role. The men really have to learn about the value of women's empowerment. If the woman is in leadership, the man and the home will be better too.

I apply it at home too. When my daughters do something to mess up, I tell them, "No. You are very important in society. Don't let no boy play on you. Because tomorrow, the country is looking at you to be a leader. And they want you to bring the country to new heights. Nobody can tell you that you cannot be a leader because you are a woman. A woman can be a leader, a woman can be president."

*NOT KNOWING BOOK = not being able to read or write



**IF I WANT TO BECOME A LEADER,
NOTHING CAN STOP ME.
I HAVE ALL THE RIGHTS.**

OUR PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

IMPACT GIRLS

Led by
Executive Director Zenabia T. Taylor

Implementation location
Bong County

Founded in
2020

Specialization
Impact Girls leads in promoting education, gender equality, and mentorship for girls and rural women

YOUNG WOMEN CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

Led by
Secretary General Roseline Toweh

Implementation location
Montserrado County

Founded in
1941

Specialization
Young Women Christian Association is an international organization that seeks to empower young girls around the world. The office in Liberia is committed to education, women empowerment, and gender mainstreaming.

BONG COUNTY WOMEN ASSOCIATION

Led by
President Madam Olivia Weetol

Implementation location
Bong County

Founded in
2003

Specialization
Bong County Women Association is committed to the empowerment of women and girls in Bong

RURAL WOMEN OF LIBERIA

Led by
National President Kebbeh Monger

Implementation location
Montserrado County

Founded in
1998

Specialization
Rural Women of Liberia seeks to support rural women in agricultural practices and empowerment



