



FROM THE PAPD TO ARREST: HOW CIVIC SATISFACTION CAN BRIDGE PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT GOALS.

September 2024



Ambasáid na hÉireann | An Libéir
Embassy of Ireland | Liberia



Acknowledgements

Photo source: Staton Winter / United Nations in Liberia

This policy report is one of the outputs of the UNDP Liberia supported project, Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index for Liberia 2023. The project was implemented by the Centre for Sustainable Peace and Democratic Development (SeeD) and the Liberia Peacebuilding Office (PBO).

The financial contributions of the Embassy of Ireland in Liberia and the Embassy of Sweden, and the UN Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) in Liberia are gratefully acknowledged, as they significantly contributed to the success of this project.

UNDP, PBO and SeeD would like to thank the following people and organisations for their work on producing this policy report.

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This report is the product of a dynamic and collaborative effort, enriched by the engagement of diverse stakeholders during a mission of SeeD researchers to Monrovia in July 2024. The mission encompassed presentations and in-depth discussions with representatives from the Peacebuilding Office, donors, government ministries, UN agencies, and other key partners. These engagements were instrumental in integrating local and institutional perspectives with robust quantitative data, ensuring that the statistical analyses were deeply grounded in Liberia's context. This mixed-methods approach highlights the synergy between strong quantitative evidence and the collective interpretation of data by local and institutional actors, fostering nuanced and actionable insights.

Disclaimer: The ideas, opinions and comments expressed in this report belong to the author(s) and are not attributable to the United Nations Development Programme or the Liberia Peacebuilding Office or the donors.

Acronyms and abbreviations

ARREST	Agriculture, Roads, Rule of Law, Education, Sanitation, and Tourism
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
GoL	Government of Liberia
LACC	Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission
LS	Livelihood Security
PAPD	Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency

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Background

Liberia experienced another democratic alternance at the head of the State, with Joseph Nyumah Boakai in replacement of George Oppong Weah. Soon in the new term, the new administration announced its strategic priorities for the next 5 years, that will cover areas like Agriculture, Roads, Rule of Law, Education, Sanitation, and Tourism, coined the ARREST Agenda. This decision illustrates a shift in the country's public policy focus, moving away from peacebuilding, as outlined in pillar 3 of the PAPD Agenda, and towards development, in line with the goals of the ARREST Agenda. From 2016 to 2021, three waves of survey's, aligned with the SCORE methodology, were conducted to provide robust evidence for accurate monitoring of the country's progress in achieving the Peacebuilding Plan's objectives. The ambition is now to adjust the SCORE metrics to provide evidence to support the new agenda.

Indeed, the third SCORE Liberia project (2020-2021) provided an opportunity to assess progress in Liberia since the closure of UNMIL on 30 March 2018, through reports around (i) progress towards sustaining peace, (ii) livelihood resilience and (iii) women and the peace dividend. This allowed us to provide policy makers with evidence-based insights which can optimize efforts to accelerate progress towards achieving key targets in the PAPD. This assessment was made possible by the work done in the previous waves (2016 and 2018) to establish a measure of social cohesion and resilience capacities in local communities for conflict prevention (SCORE Liberia 2016) and convert SCORE findings into evidence-based publications to serve as the baseline for a) Enhancing Good Governance, b) Addressing Violent Tendencies and c) Fostering Constructive Citizenship (SCORE Liberia 2018).

The current Liberia SCORE project (2023) provides an opportunity to assess progress in Liberia since the closure of UNMIL on 30th March 2018, toward the achievement of the Liberia Peacebuilding Plan's targets. It also explores the ability of SCORE metrics to provide insights that could inform the ARREST agenda. This is an important challenge to be tackled because it will establish a strategic continuity from peacebuilding to development focus, and help developing a Peace & Development Dashboard that could be useful for the Government of Liberia (GoL). The three reports in the 2023 series will explore a) livelihood resilience, b) the progress in women's situation and c) Civic Satisfaction as the bridge between peace and development. They build on the work and knowledge accrued through previous SCORE projects, and together provide policy makers with evidence-based insights to assess the achievement of PAPD's key targets and ensure the strategic continuity towards the country's new focus.

Executive Summary

1. While intergroup relations in Liberia have seen modest gains, indicators describing citizens' perception of governance efforts have significantly deteriorated. The majority of Liberians report improved interactions between ethnic and social groups, yet their trust in institutions has eroded since 2018. Citizens in most counties feel that their living standards and personal security have deteriorated over the past five years. In essence, despite greater social cohesion, skepticism towards government efforts and their ability to deliver basic services and fulfil basic needs has deepened, highlighting a growing disconnect between community progress and institutional performance.

2. Since 2018, Liberia has experienced a general decline in Civic Satisfaction across most counties, with the sharpest drop occurring between 2018 and 2021. Although a few counties, such as Nimba and River Gee, saw improvements by 2023, the overall trend remains negative, with many counties continuing to struggle with low satisfaction levels. This pattern reflects widespread perceptions of deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and governance challenges. While some counties showed signs of recovery after the 2021 shock, the rebound has been uneven, and several regions continue to face persistent declines, underscoring the need for targeted policy interventions to address these concerns.

3. The findings identify five coastal counties at risk (Grand Bassa, River Cess, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Kru, and Sinoe) as they show significant dissatisfaction with governance and fragile intergroup relationships. These counties exemplify the interconnectedness of vertical and horizontal social cohesion. The results indicate a regional trend and shed light on local challenges along the coast. Targeted development efforts are essential for these counties to improve both government-citizen relations and intergroup dynamics, addressing the identified vulnerabilities.

4. When citizens feel that their living standards, in terms of both finances and security, are improving, they are more likely to have peaceful relationships with members of other social groups. When communities acknowledge and benefit from development efforts, social cohesion is further strengthened. This reinforces the Peace-Development Nexus approach and aligns with the new administration's ARREST agenda. By confirming that progress toward development goals directly supports peacebuilding initiatives, these findings also underscore the continued relevance of the peace efforts initiated under the previous PAPD strategy.

5. Peaceful attitudes and harmonious coexistence in Liberia are closely tied to citizens' satisfaction with institutional capabilities to deliver basic services. In other words, vertical social cohesion—trust in institutions and leadership—forms the foundation for horizontal social cohesion, or harmony among citizens. **This makes it crucial to focus on counties where personal security and socioeconomic conditions are weak, as such vulnerabilities may erode social cohesion.**

6. Three key trajectories can significantly boost civic satisfaction and guide development efforts under the ARREST agenda in Liberia, offering strategic entry points to strengthen public appreciation of these initiatives: (1) Reinforcing Human Security, (2) Improving Fair and Equal Access to Opportunities, and (3) Enhancing Local Service Delivery. Health security and access to local services are essential underlying causes of dissatisfaction. Focusing on these critical areas will enhance citizens' sense of safety and well-being, promote equity and social mobility through fair access to opportunities, and increase trust in public institutions by improving the quality and efficiency of local services. Together, these efforts can drive civic satisfaction and support Liberia's broader development goals.

7. Developing a Dashboard for Action. To enhance the impact of these findings, a dashboard is essential to visualize the factors shaping citizens' satisfaction with governance and intergroup relations across Liberia. This tool will highlight key indicators influencing civic satisfaction, offering clear insights into regional strengths and weaknesses. It will guide the localization of policies by identifying vulnerable areas for targeted interventions and serve as a critical Monitoring & Evaluation tool, tracking progress and measuring the effectiveness of sectoral policies. This dashboard will support the new administration in executing the ARREST agenda with data-driven precision.

Section 1. Liberia's PAPD Journey: A SCORE-Based Review of the PAPD Agenda (2016-2023)

The publication of SCORE Liberia 2021, on peace dividend in Liberia, established a direct line between the 2018 departure of UNMIL (30 March 2018) and the monitoring of peace outcomes within the Liberian society. Liberia's peace consolidation framework was centered around the Liberian Peacebuilding Plan as requested by Security Council resolution 2333 (2016). This Plan established a timetable for Liberia's transition, focusing on two phases (support Government's commitment to embed durable national capacities, longer-term peacebuilding priorities) and a roadmap for action, while providing guidance to achieve a peaceful, fair and inclusive society, based on the rule of law and respect for human rights (SCORE Liberia, 2021).

As mentioned above, the Peacebuilding Plan referred to SCORE as a methodology for the monitoring of the progress towards achieving critical peacebuilding benchmarks, using the SCORE indicators such as Social Cohesion (i.e. a combination of indicators measuring perceived corruption, trust in institutions, feeling represented by institutions, human security and life satisfaction) and Reconciliation (i.e. a combination of indicators measuring negative stereotypes, intergroup anxiety, social distance, social threats and active discrimination). This process resulted in the adoption of SCORE metrics, in the GOL's five-year Pro-Poor Agenda for Prosperity and Development (PAPD), to measure critical performance indicators in the PAPD.

The following Figure shows the articulation of the key indicators chosen to track the progress of pillars I, II and III of the PAPD.

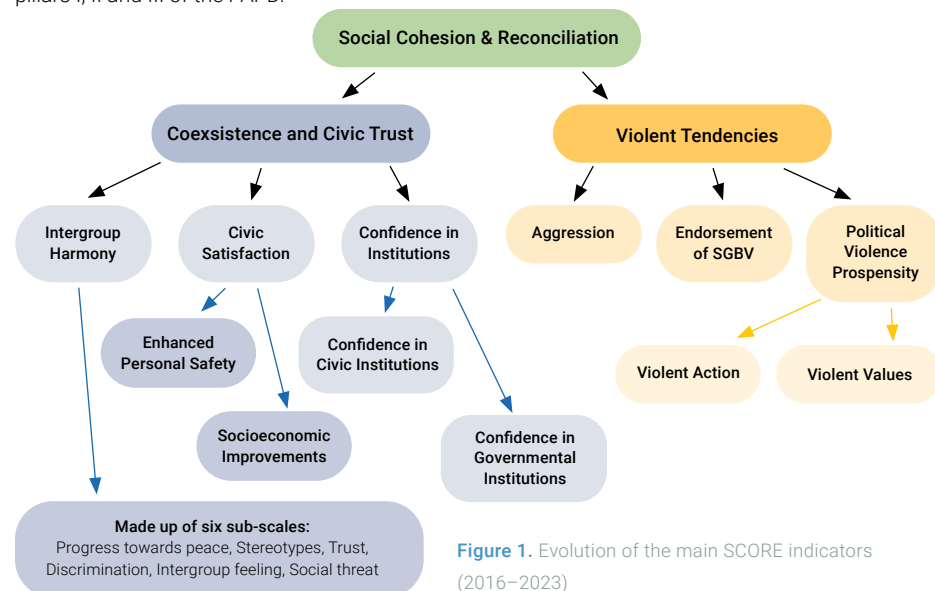


Figure 1. Evolution of the main SCORE indicators (2016-2023)

Based on these metrics, it was possible to monitor the progress towards the “empowerment of Liberians to gain control of their lives; reaching the furthest first and leaving no one behind” (pillar I), the capacity to create “a stable macroeconomic environment enabling private sector-led economic growth, greater competitiveness, and diversification of the economy” (pillar II) and the capacity to generate “a more peaceful and unified society that enables economic transformation and sustainable development” (pillar III).

	2016	2018	2021	2023	Targeted (2023)
Liberia's overall SCORE	6,6	7,1	6,6	7	8
Coexistence and Civic Trust	5,2	6,1	5,4	5,5	7
Violent tendencies	1,9	1,8	1,9	1,4	0,5

Table 1. Evolution of the key components of the SCORE Liberia

Table 1, showing the country's Social Cohesion indicator and its main components (“Coexistence and Civic trust” and “Violence Tendencies”), revealed that all the indicators have returned, in 2021, to their 2016 level, and further apart from the 2023 targeted level. In a nutshell, the improvement trend observed between 2016 and 2018 was interrupted as the scores from 2021 are similar to the ones in 2016. The main hypothesis to explain the spike in 2018 is the optimism generated by a newly elected President, and the success of a peaceful election and change in government¹. However, the overall picture demonstrates that **in the period from 2016 to 2023 Liberians have perceived a slight improvement in their social and developmental situation.**

In 2018, six key indicators were identified and linked to their respective 2023 targets to effectively monitor the GOL's policy progress under Peace Pillar III of the PAPD. Figure 2 provides a detailed view of the 2023 results, showing that most high-level PAPD indicators fell short of their goals. Among these, only the “Endorsement of SGBV” indicator achieved a value close to its 2023 target.

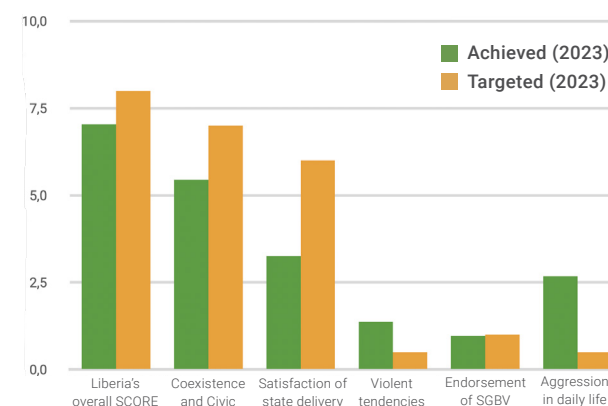


Figure 2. Evolution of PAPD's indicators

However, other indicators, such as “Coexistence and Civic Trust” and “Satisfaction with State Service Delivery,” showed particularly poor performance.

¹ See SCORE Report 2021, Sustaining Peace in Liberia. Assessing opportunities and threats three years after UNMIL's departure.

As shown in Figure 1, the Liberia Social Cohesion indicator consists of two components: Coexistence and Civic Trust, and Violent Tendencies. According to Table 1, in 2023, Coexistence and Civic Trust is further from its high-level target compared to Violent Tendencies, with deviations of -1.5 and -0.9, respectively. To assist the new administration in developing effective policies, it is crucial to focus on improving Coexistence and Civic Trust, as this area demonstrates the greatest need for enhancement. Additionally, this indicator encompasses both Peace goals (such as intergroup harmony) and Development goals (including civic satisfaction and trust in institutions). From this perspective, it provides insight into both the focus of the PAPD strategy (peacebuilding

	2018-2023
Coexistence and Civic Trust	-1,0
Intergroup Harmony	0,0
Lack of Intergroup Stereotypes	0,4
Lack of Intergroup Social Threat	0,0
Lack of Intergroup Discrimination	0,1
Intergroup Trust	0,9
Lack of Intergroup Negative Feelings	0,0
Intergroup Social Proximity	0,8
Progress Towards Peace	-2,3
Civic Satisfaction	-2,2
Enhanced Personal Safety	-2,5
Socioeconomic Progress	-1,9
Confidence in Institutions	-1,5
Confidence in Governmental Institutions	-2,2
Confidence in Civic Institutions	-1,0

Figure 3. Components of the Coexistence and Civic Trust indicator

between different ethnic and social groups have improved. However, their trust in institutions has decreased since 2018, and they believe that their right to security and socioeconomic conditions have worsened during this period. In other words, although citizens are experiencing more harmonious interactions between groups, they are also more skeptical about the governance and its accomplishments.

The SCORE methodology aims to guide policy development for tangible improvements in key areas of life. However, Civic Satisfaction and Progress toward Peace remain below target, highlighting the need for substantial progress. Personal safety, health security, and socioeconomic growth are critical to achieving these improvements but remain major gaps in the PAPD's goals. With the shift to the ARREST agenda, Civic Satisfaction becomes a key measure as it informs about the ability of the governance to meet the expectations of the citizens in key areas of life. It could help to track the success of the new development agenda and act as an early warning system for risks to social cohesion and stability.

objectives) and the new ARREST agenda (development objectives). Figure 3 offers a snapshot of the components' evolution within this indicator and helps identify the specific elements that undermine its performance.

Figure 3 presents the evolution of Coexistence and Civic trust components since 2018. **While most indicators demonstrating intergroup relationships have shown slight improvement, all indicators describing citizens' perception of governance efforts have significantly deteriorated.** The majority of Liberians believe that interactions

Section 2. Why does Civic Satisfaction matter?

2.1. What is Civic Satisfaction?

Civic Satisfaction measures the extent to which citizens are happy with the provision of legitimate rights that they should expect from a democratic governance system. It is based on six steps that align with the early stages of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. By considering all six needs, it is possible to identify any deficits and adjust policies accordingly. Additionally, understanding how individuals perceive their access to basic services is vital for measuring citizens' attachment to institutions and their trust in the governance system.

The ability to earn a living captures the most basic needs, Physiological needs (category #1), whereas the Safety needs (category #2), are illustrated by questions about quality of education services, quality of health services, personal safety. As for Personal freedom, the fifth parameter of Civic Satisfaction, it represents respondents' appreciation of Belongingness needs (category #3). The last item (respect of human dignity) reveals respondents' appreciation of the improvements concerning Esteem needs (category #4). The following Figure shows the evolution of the access to those basic needs in the last two years.

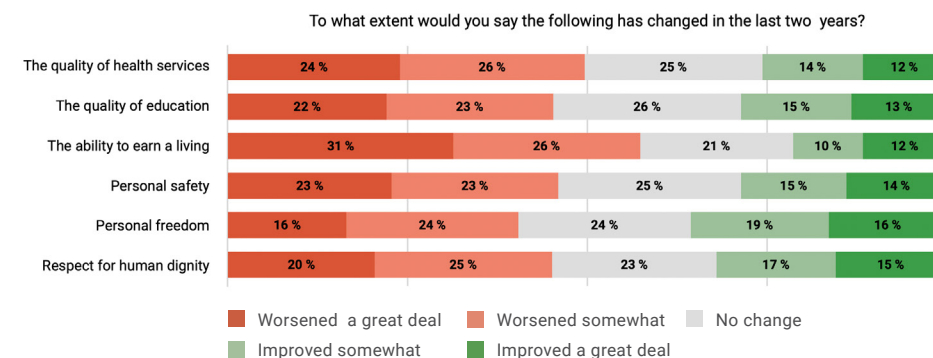


Figure 4. Components of Civic Satisfaction

Based on the above, Figure 4 highlights that more than three persons out of four did not experience any improvement in satisfying the most basic needs (physiological needs), and 57 percent find it significantly more challenging to make a living. As for the safety needs (quality of education services, quality of health services and personal safety) one individual out of two consider that the situation deteriorated in the last two years. The most notable improvement concerns Personal freedom, with 36 percent of respondents mentioning some progress, though slightly lower than what was reported in 2021 (39 percent).

The series of basic needs which forms Civic Satisfaction can be organized along two key pillars:

1. PERCEIVED SOCIOECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT: This refers to the extent to which citizens perceive improvements in key socioeconomic sectors such as health and education services, along with individual capacity to earn a living. This pillar highlights the importance of citizens perceiving advancements in key socioeconomic sectors. Despite progress, Liberia's economy remains fragile, with high unemployment rates and limited industrialization (Kollie, 2018). The healthcare system is still in the process of rebuilding, grappling with gaps in infrastructure, workforce, and service delivery (Tatus, 2017). Furthermore, the education sector faces significant challenges, including insufficient funding, low enrolment rates, and poor quality of education (Sumaworo, 2023). Enhancements in these areas are crucial for improving the overall quality of life and the ability of individuals to earn a living.

2. ENHANCED PERSONAL SAFETY: This involves the degree to which citizens feel an increased sense of security and freedom, including personal safety, personal freedom, and respect for human dignity. This pillar addresses the critical need for citizens to feel secure and free. In Liberia, issues of crime and political instability continue to affect the sense of personal safety (Parry, 2016). Ensuring personal safety, personal freedom, and respect for human dignity is vital for fostering a stable and cohesive society. Improvements in these areas are essential for citizens to feel confident in their security and freedom, which are foundational for Civic Satisfaction.

Nimba, Bomi, and Gbarpolu report the highest socioeconomic progress, with Bomi and Gbarpolu seeing the most significant improvement in the last two years.

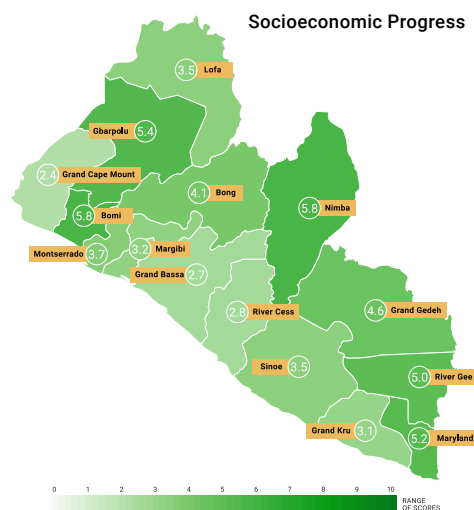


Figure 5. Heatmap Socioeconomic Progress

Grand Cape Mount, Grand Bassa, and River Cess report the lowest socioeconomic improvement with Grand Gedeh and River Cess seeing the most significant drop in the last two years.

River Gee, Nimba, Bomi, and Gbarpolu report the highest personal safety, with Bomi and Gbarpolu seeing the most significant improvement in the last two years.

Grand Bassa, Grand Kru, Margibi and River Cess report the lowest personal safety with Margibi and River Cess seeing the most significant drop in the last two years.



Figure 6. Progress in Personal Safety

Based on these results, it appears that citizens from Nimba, Bomi, and Gbarpolu are the most satisfied at both the socioeconomic and personal safety levels. In contrast, residents of Grand Bassa and River Cess express the highest levels of dissatisfaction, perceiving a decline in both living standards and personal security in recent years. In general, counties that report low levels of Civic Satisfaction also report deficient access to specific and key public services. These services include access to state documents, an effective road network, an effective county service center, provision of justice services, and job market management.

2.2. How did it evolve since 2018?

As illustrated by the heatmaps in Figures 5 and 6, Civic Satisfaction is notably low in counties where citizens perceive a decline in their socioeconomic conditions and physical security in recent years. In particular, residents of Grand Bassa, River Cess, Grand Kru, and Grand Cape Mount express the highest levels of dissatisfaction with governance. This marks a significant shift from just a few years ago. A comparison with the previous SCORE survey reveals how citizens' views on governance have evolved across these regions over time.

The same questions were asked during the previous Score waves in 2018 and 2021. The following Figure helps to indicate that there has been a slight improvement since 2021 at the socioeconomic level, while personal security has shown a slight decline on average. However, it is important to note that these numbers conceal significant disparities across the country (see Table 2).



Figure 7. Heatmap Civic Satisfaction

	Ability to earn a living	Quality of education	Quality of health services	Personal safety	Personal freedom	Respect for human dignity
Improvement between 2021 and 2023	7 %	4 %	2 %	-7 %	-3 %	-3 %

Table 2. Performance of Civic Satisfaction's components between 2021 and 2023

Considering the period from 2018 to 2023, only six counties (Bomi, Bong, Gbarpolu, Grand Cape Mount, Montserrado, and Nimba) show a positive change in both socioeconomic conditions and personal safety. This highlights poor performance for the other counties during this time frame. In other words, citizens in most counties feel that their living standards and personal security have deteriorated over the past five years. Bomi and Gbarpolu have seen the greatest improvement, while residents of River Cess and Grand Gedeh are the most critical of how governance has addressed their basic needs.

Table 3 provides insights about the counties with the most increasing share of unsatisfied people (red). These people are mostly located in urban areas, and 64 percent of these urban respondents reported relatively lower income (compared to 70 percent and 88 percent respectively for semi-rural and rural respondents).

Change between 2018 and 2023	Bomi	Bong	Gbarpolu	Grand Bassa	Grand Cape Mount	Grand Gedeh	Grand Kru	Lofa	Margibi	Maryland	Montserrado	Nimba	River Cess	River Gee	Sinoe
Socioeconomic Progress	4,3	0,9	3,5	-0,8	0,8	-1,1	-0,6	-0,8	-0,2	-0,3	0,7	2,3	-1	-0,2	-0,2
Progress in Personal Safety	2	0	2	-1,2	0,2	-2,3	-1,1	-0,7	-1,5	-0,8	0,3	0,8	-1,6	-0,4	-0,8

Table 3. Performance of Civic Satisfaction's components between 2018 and 2023

The following Figure highlights the overall trends identified since 2018, tracking the local shifts in citizens' appreciation of governance.

Civic Satisfaction in Decline: Mapping Liberia's 2021 Shock and Slow Recovery
Mapping Liberia's 2021 Shock and Slow Recovery

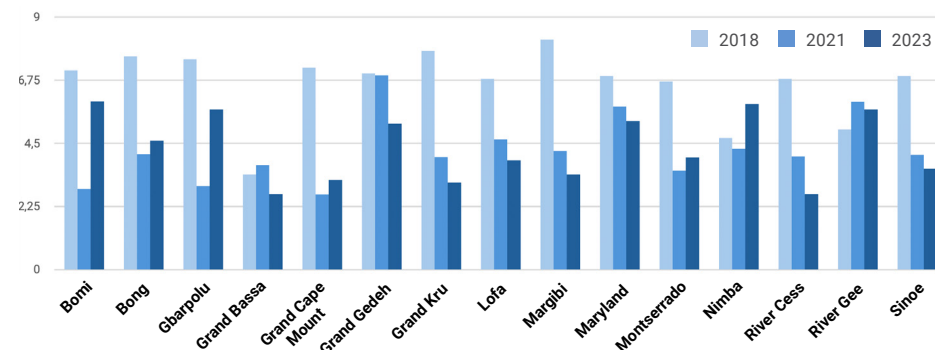


Figure 8. Evolution of Civic Satisfaction since 2018

The key insights can be summarized as follows:

- 1. OVERALL DECLINE:** Nearly all counties are in a worse position compared to five years ago, with citizens expressing lower levels of satisfaction than in 2018.
- 2. EXCEPTIONS TO THE TREND:** Only Nimba and River Gee show improvement, with higher Civic Satisfaction in 2023 than in 2018.
- 3. SIGNIFICANT DECLINES:** The steepest declines are seen in Margibi, Grand Kru, River Cess, and Grand Cape Mount, with drops of 4 points, indicating that approximately 40% of the population perceives a deterioration in living conditions.
- 4. KEY PERIOD OF DECLINE (2018-2021):** The major downturn occurred between 2018 and 2021. During this period, most counties experienced a decline in Civic Satisfaction, with the exception of Grand Bassa and River Gee, which either maintained or slightly improved. Grand Gedeh saw only a minimal decrease.
- 5. RECOVERY IN SOME COUNTIES:** Following the common dip in 2021, some counties began to recover, notably Bomi and Gbarpolu, with partial rebounds observed in Nimba as well.
- 6. CONTINUED DECLINE IN OTHERS:** In contrast, several counties, including Grand Kru, Lofa, Margibi, Maryland, River Cess, and Sinoe, continued to see declines post-2021. Grand Gedeh and Grand Bassa had a unique pattern, showing resilience in 2021 but starting to decline afterward. impact of ecological deterioration on agricultural productivity and community well-being.

Section 3. Supporting the Simultaneous Achievement of Development and Peace Goals

Civic Satisfaction provides information on the relationship between citizens and their institutions. It indicates the extent to which Liberians are satisfied with the efforts of the government in terms of access to basic rights and living standards. Increasing levels of Civic Satisfaction would result in stronger vertical social cohesion, as it would lead to better interaction between Liberians and their institutions. The decision has been made to focus the advanced analysis on Civic Satisfaction, with the goal of identifying the key predictors that influence this indicator. Specifically, the aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and factors that may undermine citizens' perception of the development efforts initiated by government institutions. In other words, the analysis will shed light on the underlying causes of citizen's dissatisfaction. By pinpointing the drivers of Civic Satisfaction, the GoL will be better equipped to assess the public's approval of the actions taken under the ARREST Agenda. This insight offers the GoL a valuable opportunity to monitor public responses to its top-down interventions and make timely adjustments when needed.

3.1. Testing the Peace Development hypothesis

The transition from the PAPD agenda to the ARREST agenda signals a shift from peace-focused priorities to development-focused priorities. The advanced analysis aims to support this transition by examining the potential connections between indicators that inform us about citizens' perceptions of governance actions (Civic Satisfaction, which reflects the social reception of development efforts) and intergroup relationships (Progress towards Peace, which measures the quality of social interactions among diverse social and ethnic groups).

The hypothesis assumes that an increase in Civic Satisfaction would result in progress towards peace. In simpler terms, the analysis aimed to test the idea that if citizens are more satisfied with the development actions of their institutions, it would contribute to improving intergroup relationships. In summary, the model investigates the Peace Development nexus by determining if increasing social recognition of development efforts leads to a harmonious social cohesion.

By doing so, it is possible to identify a potential bridge between peace and development in Liberia. Building upon these results will help to solidify the transition between the PAPD and the ARREST agenda.

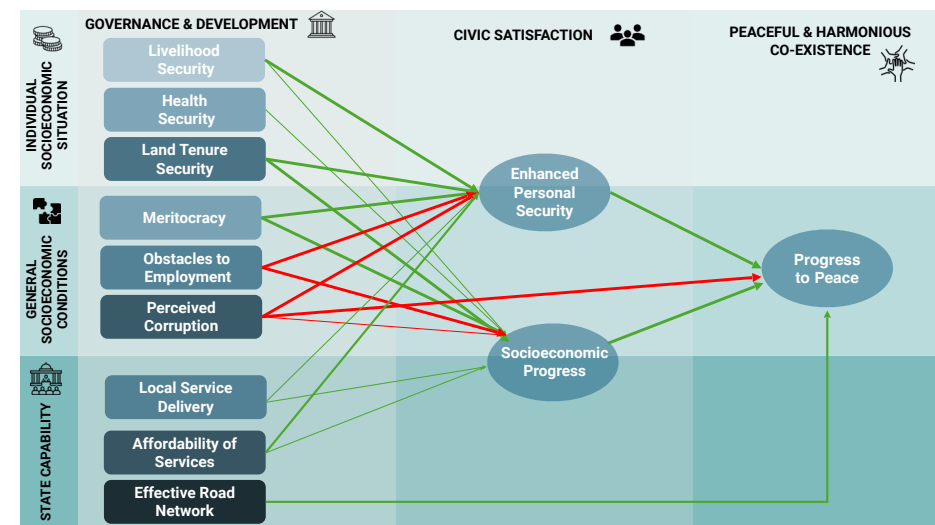


Figure 9. Predictors of Civic Satisfaction

Figure 9 visualizes the results of the predictive model, providing insight into the dynamics that impact the peace and development outcomes in the country. By using regressions², the predictive model identifies the causal relationships between a series of indicators. Green arrows represent a positive relationship (e.g., an increase in indicator A leads to an increase in indicator B), while a red arrow indicates a negative relationship (an increase in indicator A predicts a decrease in indicator B). Additionally, the thickness of the arrow reflects the strength of the causal influence (i.e., the thicker the arrow, the stronger its impact on the other factor).

3.2. When Civic Satisfaction contributes to peace

The two dimensions of Civic Satisfaction, personal security and socioeconomic progress, contribute to progress towards peace. When citizens feel that their living standards, in terms of both finances and security, are improving, they are more likely to have peaceful relationships with members of other social groups. When society recognizes and acknowledges development efforts, intergroup relations are enhanced. This aligns with the approach of the Peace Development nexus and supports the development trajectory chosen by the new administration through the ARREST agenda as it confirms that striving for development goals will help strengthen the peace efforts planned under the previous PAPD strategy.

² Regression analysis is widely used in statistical modelling to explore the relationship between a dependent variable and one or more independent variables. It helps estimate the strength of the relationships, allowing for predictions or understanding how changes in the predictors influence the outcome.

Shifting the focus to Civic Satisfaction is not only crucial for development, but also for peace. Therefore, it is important to pay close attention to counties where personal security and socioeconomic progress perform poorly, as social cohesion may deteriorate. In this context, special attention should be given to the localities of Grand Bassa and River Cess. The majority of respondents in these counties are dissatisfied with the progress of their living standards, which could potentially lead to unrest and strained interactions between groups.

It is noteworthy that two variables, Perceived Corruption and Effective Road Network, bypass Civic Satisfaction and exert direct influence on Peace and Harmonious Coexistence. Although these variables seem to reflect different dynamics, both can be seen as outcomes linked to perceptions of social injustice. The lack of access to an effective road network can be perceived by citizens as an indication of neglect by the government and a form of territorial injustice. Similarly, the perception of corruption reflects a belief in unequal treatment, suggesting that powerful individuals can access goods and services meant to be equally available to all, but do so through corrupt means. Both scenarios underscore a broader sentiment of inequity and lack of transparency in the provision of public goods. This highlights the critical link between citizens and institutions, where trust and fair treatment from the governance (vertical social cohesion) are essential to sustaining harmonious relationships among citizens themselves (horizontal social cohesion).

3.3. If Civic Satisfaction is the key, how can it be enhanced?

As shown in Figure 9, several phenomena contribute to strengthening Civic Satisfaction. These indicators can be organized along three major categories: individual socioeconomic conditions, general socioeconomic conditions and state capabilities. These categories highlight three trajectories: development efforts should focus on reinforcing Human Security (1), improving Fair and Equal Access to Opportunities (2) and enhancing Local Services Delivery (3). The identification of these predictors offers critical insights into the underlying causes of civic dissatisfaction, helping to explain the voices of discontent and the sharp decline in civic satisfaction observed across the country since 2018 (see Figure 8).

3.3.1. Overall evolution of the predictors since 2018

Table 5 provides a detailed overview of the evolution of the key predictors of civic satisfaction over the past five years. Overall, most indicators have shown a decline since 2018, with the steepest drops occurring between 2018 and 2021. Although there has been some recovery in the scores since 2021, it has not been sufficient to return to the levels observed in 2018. The most significant declines have been recorded in health security, with **many citizens perceiving that**

healthcare services were performing better five years ago. Similarly, despite the introduction of several anti-corruption initiatives³, the perceived level of corruption has worsened. A growing number of citizens believe that corruption has increased since 2018, further undermining public trust in institutions.

Categories	Variables	2018	2021	2023	2018-2023	2021-2023
Individual's socioeconomic situation	Livelihood Security	5.1	4	4.5	-0.6	0.5
	Health Security	5.5	3.9	4	-1.5	0.1
	Land Tenure Security	NA	NA	4.8	NA	NA
General socioeconomic conditions	Meritocracy	NA	4.5	4.1	-0.4	-0.4
	Obstacles to Employment	NA	4.3	4.7	NA	0.5
	Perceived Level of Corruption	4.4	5.3	5.4	-1.0	0.1
State capability	Affordability of Local Services	4.6	4.4	4.4	-0.2	0.0
	Local Service Delivery	5.5	5.2	5.3	-0.2	0.1
	Effective Road Network	3.9	4.3	4.3	0.4	0.0

Table 5. Performance of Governance & Development indicators between 2018 and 2023

This overall trend highlights why civic satisfaction remains low across the country. The persistent declines in key indicators—particularly those related to personal security, livelihood, and governance—help explain why many citizens in various counties feel that their living standards and sense of personal security have deteriorated over the past five years.

However, this overall trend should not obscure the fact that significant regional differences exist, and the causes of civic dissatisfaction vary across the country.

- For instance, the decline in health security appears to be a key driver of discontent in three counties that have experienced the sharpest decline in Civic Satisfaction since 2018. Specifically, it is the reduced access to healthcare services that has contributed to the dissatisfaction of citizens in Grand Cape Mount, Grand Kru, and River Cess with governance actions. The decline in health security thus emerges as a critical factor shaping civic dissatisfaction nationwide.
- It is also worth noting that these counties experienced the most abrupt decline in Progress towards Peace since 2018, confirming the model's interpretation that a decline in civic satisfaction leads to a deterioration in intergroup relations and undermines social cohesion.

³ See for instance the Anti-Corruption Innovation Project, which aims to foster a partnership between the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (LACC) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), with support from UNDP and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

- In Grand Bassa, where many citizens are dissatisfied with their living standards, the reasons for this dissatisfaction differ. For example, residents report the strongest decline in access to local services and road network in the entire country since 2020. Additionally, this county exhibits the highest levels of obstacles to employment.
- To summarize, Figure 9 helps to clarify the underlying causes of dissatisfaction and provides insights into local sources of discontent. In this context, creating a Dashboard would be a valuable tool for tracking local grievances related to governance (see Section 4).

3.3.2. Individual socioeconomic conditions: Civic Satisfaction in Liberia is driven by Human Security

Livelihood Security: This represents economic security, a key pillar of human security. When individuals feel confident in their ability to earn a living and provide for themselves and their families, it reinforces their sense of control over their future and reduces vulnerability to poverty.

Health Security: Access to healthcare ensures protection from disease and promotes physical well-being, which is a fundamental aspect of human security. People who feel secure in their health are less likely to experience fear or instability, contributing to a more satisfied and stable society.

Land Security: Land security relates to environmental and material security, ensuring that individuals have stable access to essential resources. In many cases, land ownership or access is deeply tied to identity, livelihood, and social stability, further reinforcing a sense of human security⁴.

These three dynamics are interconnected, reinforcing the concept of human security as a multidimensional framework. The ability to secure land ownership and access healthcare plays a crucial role in supporting economic and food security, especially for rural communities in Liberia. In essence, when citizens have reliable access to healthcare, stable food and economic security, and confidence in their land rights, they experience greater physical and financial security. This sense of security translates into higher levels of satisfaction with their society and governance.

⁴ See Section 3

The findings confirm that strengthening human security directly enhances Civic Satisfaction, highlighting the need for policies that protect economic, health, and land security. Ultimately, the model demonstrates that this not only enhances individual well-being but also fosters more harmonious intergroup interactions within the broader community.

3.3.3. General socio-economic conditions: Civic Satisfaction in Liberia is driven by Fairness and Equal Access to Opportunities

Meritocracy: When individuals believe that opportunities (such as jobs, promotions, or access to services) are based on merit, they tend to feel more satisfied with the society in which they live. This suggests that perceptions of fairness, equal opportunity, and competence in public or private institutions build trust in the system. Meritocracy aligns with democratic values and gives people hope that their hard work and qualifications will be rewarded, leading to greater Civic Satisfaction.

Obstacles to Employment: When people face barriers to employment, whether due to lack of jobs, skills mismatch, or systemic challenges, their sense of satisfaction diminishes. Access to meaningful employment is a key factor in providing economic stability, which in turn supports access to basic needs. Therefore, employment challenges directly erode the sense of security and satisfaction within a community.

Perceived Corruption: Corruption, whether in government or business, erodes trust and makes people feel that the system is unjust or rigged against them. When citizens perceive high levels of corruption, it leads to frustration, disengagement, and dissatisfaction, as corruption is often seen as a barrier to accessing resources and opportunities fairly.

The three indicators—meritocracy, employment obstacles, and corruption—form a narrative centred on fairness, access, and trust. Meritocracy fosters satisfaction by promoting fairness, while obstacles to employment and corruption undermine it. A fair, transparent system is key to Civic Satisfaction, while barriers and corruption lead to discontent. Transparent governance and policies that promote meritocracy and reduce barriers are essential for enhancing Civic Satisfaction.

3.3.4. State Capabilities: Civic Satisfaction in Liberia is driven by Effective Local Services and Infrastructure

Local Service Delivery: Effective local service delivery, such as public utilities, education, healthcare, or other government services, directly impacts citizens' quality of life. When people receive timely and reliable services, it fosters a sense of trust and satisfaction in the local governance structure.

Affordability of Services: The affordability of essential services plays a key role in ensuring equitable access. If services are priced within reach of the general population, especially those with lower incomes, it reduces economic strain and improves people's ability to meet their basic needs.

Effective Road Network: A well-maintained and functional road network enhances mobility and access to markets, healthcare, education, and other services. It also plays a critical role in economic development by facilitating trade and communication. An efficient road network signals strong infrastructure, which in turn boosts citizens' confidence in their government.

The three indicators highlight the crucial role of accessibility and functionality in civic infrastructure. When people can efficiently and affordably access essential services, supported by strong infrastructure like roads, their satisfaction significantly increases. This confirms the hypothesis that improving access to services and infrastructure enhances Civic Satisfaction. It underscores the need for investments in local service delivery and infrastructure to boost residents' quality of life and overall satisfaction with their community.

Section 4. Towards a Peace & Development Dashboard to support Civic Satisfaction in Liberia

4.1. A Dashboard to monitor Peace & Development in Liberia

With the recent paradigm shift from the PAPD to the ARREST development strategy, the predictive model (Figure 9) reveals three key insights:

1. There is a significant link between development-focused priorities and peacebuilding priorities, indicating that development actions will influence peaceful coexistence either directly or indirectly. In other words, vertical social cohesion is a condition to horizontal social cohesion.
2. Since Civic Satisfaction drives peaceful intergroup relations, it is crucial to enhance public perception of the GoL's development initiatives.
3. To boost Civic Satisfaction, actions should focus on three critical areas: improving human security, ensuring fair and equal access to opportunities, and increasing the efficiency of local services.

In light of these findings, it is essential to create a tool that visualizes the factors affecting citizens' satisfaction with governance and intergroup relationships nationwide. Table 6 below presents an initial draft of what a strategic dashboard could be, showing county-level performance⁵.

This document offers a snapshot of the performance levels of key indicators that directly or indirectly predict citizen satisfaction with peace and development benefits. In this perspective, the dashboard can assist the new administration in strategizing and implementing the ARREST agenda. Its uses can be sequential:

1. It presents clear and evidence-based information on the local strengths and weaknesses throughout the country.
2. It can guide the localization of policies by identifying vulnerable hotspots.
3. It serves as a Monitoring & Evaluation tool to track the progression of indicators and assess the effectiveness of sectoral policies.

⁵ or each indicator, a county's score will be represented by a red-like color if it is lower than the scores of other counties. Conversely, a county's score will be represented by a green-like color if it is higher than the scores of other counties. A county with a red score, when compared column-wise, is considered to be in a worse situation than a county with a green score.

Indicators	Bomi	Bong	Charpolu	Grand Bassa	Grand Cape Mount	Grand Gedeh	Grand Kru	Lofa	Margibi	Maryland	Montserrado	Nimba	River Cess	River Gee	Sinoe
Livelihood Security	4.6	4.5	4.7	3.5	4.2	4.9	2.7	4.3	3.7	4.4	4.7	5	3.5	4.8	3.3
Health Security	3.6	2.9	3.2	2.5	3.4	4.1	2.2	2.8	3.7	5	4.9	4.2	2.8	5.1	2.6
Land Tenure Security	5.6	5.2	5.5	5.5	4.8	5.5	4.8	5.1	4.6	4.5	4.2	5.7	5.8	4.9	5.1
Meritocracy	4.3	3.2	3.7	3	3.4	5.9	4.8	3.8	3.8	5.1	4.2	4.6	4.1	5.4	3.6
Obstacles to Employment	3.7	4.2	3.6	7.1	5.1	5.5	6.7	3.8	5.3	4.4	4.5	3.6	7.1	5.8	6.7
Perceived Level of Corruption	4	5.7	4.1	6	5.4	3.5	5.6	5.2	5.8	5.4	6	4.2	5.5	4.1	5.5
Local Service Delivery	5	4.5	4.6	4.1	4.8	4.7	3.8	4.3	5	5.4	5.2	5.8	3.9	5.3	4.5
Affordability of Services	5.1	3.7	4.8	3.4	4.2	4.2	3.3	3.7	4.2	4.7	4.6	5.5	3.2	4.3	3.6
Effective Road Network	4.8	4.3	4.8	2.7	4	3.8	2.8	3.1	4.8	3.5	4.7	5.4	2.2	4.5	1.7
Civic Satisfaction	6	4.6	5.7	2.7	3.2	5.2	3.1	3.9	3.4	5.3	4	5.9	2.7	5.7	3.6
Progress towards Peace	7.2	4.8	6.7	3	3.1	6	3.8	4.4	4.2	5.9	4.7	6.8	3.1	6.5	3.9

Table 6. Baseline Liberia Peace and Development Dashboard (2023)

Illustration: Insights from the Peace and Development Dashboard on Liberia's Coastal Counties

The Peace and Development Dashboard provides a clear overview of which counties are underperforming. Five counties—Grand Bassa, River Cess, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Kru, and Sinoe—stand out for their low scores in both Civic Satisfaction and Progress towards Peace.

These results confirm the hypothesis that satisfaction with governance and intergroup relations are interdependent, as the same counties report the lowest scores for both indicators.

The Dashboard also reveals a notable geographical trend: all five counties are located along Liberia's coast. However, it goes beyond just identifying regional patterns, offering valuable insights into the local dynamics contributing to low levels of vertical (government-citizen) and horizontal (intergroup) social cohesion.

For instance, in Grand Bassa, citizens are particularly skeptical about fair access to opportunities, perceiving the system as non-meritocratic and the public sector as corrupt. In Grand Kru, poor human security is a major driver of dissatisfaction and fuels intergroup tensions. Additionally, inadequate infrastructure, especially the poor road network, exacerbates the county's challenges.

Although Grand Cape Mount does not show alarming indicators on any specific measure, its performance across all indicators is consistently below the national average, contributing to its overall poor performance.

These five counties deserve focused attention, as their citizens exhibit a critical stance toward institutions, combined with fragile intergroup relations. In other words, development efforts in these regions should prioritize strengthening both vertical and horizontal social cohesion to address the vulnerabilities highlighted by the Dashboard.

4.2 Supporting the country’s new Agenda: solution from the Liberia Peace & Development Dashboard

The 100-Day Action Plan, designed by the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, was implemented after the new President took office on January 22, 2024. It is based on a thorough understanding of the situation and the challenges that require immediate action to regain public trust (Government of Liberia 100-Day Action Plan, 2024).

The 100-Day Action Plan emphasizes that gaining citizens’ trust is crucial to the agenda’s success. Addressing people’s needs from the outset is the most effective way to ensure their interests are reflected in the plan’s implementation. Table 7 illustrates the alignment between the ARREST Agenda’s components and the Governance & Development indicators integrated into the Dashboard. By linking these components to the core objectives of the 100-Day Action Plan, the Dashboard serves as a tool to track the agenda’s progress and ensure that development efforts foster both vertical and horizontal cohesion, thus reinforcing peace and development goals simultaneously.

Components of the new strategic Agenda	Corresponding objectives in the 100-Day Action Plan	Governance & Development indicators
Agriculture	Strategic Objective 4 (economic development support)	Livelihood Security
		Land Tenure Security
Roads	Strategic Objective 2 (infrastructure development)	Effective Road Network
Rule of Law	Strategic Objective 1 (robust anti-corruption measures)	Meritocracy
		Perceived Level of Corruption
Education	Strategic Objective 3 (educational opportunities)	Affordability of Local Services
		Local Service Delivery
Sanitation	Strategic Objective 2 (infrastructure development)	Health Security
Tourism	Strategic Objective 4 (Agriculture, commerce and tourism)	Obstacles to Employment

Table 7. Potential Governance & Development indicators to track ARREST progress

The ARREST Agenda integrates both development and peace outcomes, highlighting its strategic approach to fostering peaceful coexistence alongside development goals. Monitoring the implementation of these objectives across counties is essential, and the Peace & Development Dashboard plays a key role by tracking citizens’ satisfaction, governance, and development indicators, as well as the state of peaceful coexistence. The 2023 Dashboard provides Liberia with baseline data to measure progress over the next five years and make adjustments as needed.

Key Messages & Policy Recommendations

DECLINING CIVIC SATISFACTION AND UNEVEN RECOVERY

Since 2018, Liberia has witnessed a general decline in Civic Satisfaction across most counties, with the sharpest drop occurring between 2018 and 2021. Although a few counties, such as Nimba and River Gee, saw improvements by 2023, many regions continue to struggle with low satisfaction levels. This reflects growing perceptions of deteriorating socioeconomic conditions and governance challenges. While some counties began to recover after the 2021 shock, the rebound has been uneven. Targeted policy interventions must prioritize regions still experiencing persistent dissatisfaction, with a focus on restoring public trust in governance and improving local conditions.

THE PEACE-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS: A FOUNDATION FOR ARREST

Citizens’ satisfaction with living standards—particularly in finances and personal security—directly influences peaceful relations between social groups. When communities experience tangible benefits from development efforts, social cohesion is strengthened. On the other hand, counties facing significant socioeconomic and security challenges are particularly vulnerable to eroding social cohesion. Policymakers should focus on strengthening institutional capacity and service delivery in these regions, recognizing that addressing citizens’ vulnerabilities can prevent the further weakening of social harmony. These findings affirm the relevance of the Peace-Development Nexus and align with the ARREST agenda of the new administration. By recognizing that progress towards development goals fosters peace, policymakers should prioritize development initiatives that also enhance social cohesion. The lessons from the previous PAPD agenda remain valuable, and integrating peacebuilding with development strategies remains essential for sustainable progress.

SOCIAL COHESION GAINS AMIDST GOVERNANCE EROSION

While intergroup relations in Liberia have seen improvements and that the majority of Liberians report better interactions between ethnic and social groups, yet the citizen’s appreciation of the Governance actions has eroded since 2018. This growing skepticism reflects widespread dissatisfaction with the government’s ability to deliver essential services and improve living standards. Policymakers must recognize the disconnect

between social cohesion and institutional performance, addressing governance gaps to ensure that the gains in community relations are not undermined by declining public trust.

THREE PILLARS TO ENHANCE CIVIC SATISFACTION UNDER ARREST

The analysis offers critical insights into the underlying causes of civic dissatisfaction, helping to explain the sharp decline in civic satisfaction observed across the country since 2018. To boost civic satisfaction and align development efforts with the ARREST agenda, three key trajectories should guide policy interventions:

- **REINFORCING HUMAN SECURITY:** Ensure citizens feel secure in their livelihoods and personal safety by addressing critical issues like food security, health services, and crime prevention.
- **IMPROVING FAIR AND EQUAL ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITIES:** Enhance equity and social mobility by creating fair access to employment, education, and other opportunities that empower individuals.
- **ENHANCING LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY:** Improve the quality, accessibility, and efficiency of local services, including roads, healthcare, and education, to restore trust in public institutions.

These focus areas can drive public confidence, increase social cohesion, and support Liberia's broader development goals.

COASTAL COUNTIES AT RISK: GOVERNANCE DISSATISFACTION AND FRAGILE SOCIAL COHESION

The findings highlight five coastal counties—Grand Bassa, River Cess, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Kru, and Sinoe—that exhibit high levels of dissatisfaction with governance efforts, along with fragile intergroup relationships. These counties illustrate the interdependence of vertical and horizontal social cohesion. The results reveal a regional trend and provide insights into local issues along the coast of the country. These counties require targeted development efforts to enhance both government-citizen relations and intergroup relations, addressing the identified vulnerabilities.

ESTABLISH CITIZEN SATISFACTION AS A KEY INDICATOR FOR THE COUNTRY'S DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

The new ARREST agenda, as a supply-side intervention, aims to address specific challenges faced by Liberia and its people. To ensure the agenda's success, it is essential to monitor the effective implementation of planned actions. However, effectiveness does not always equate to efficiency. Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate bottom-up feedback to complement top-down government interventions, ensuring that the agenda aligns with citizens' expectations.

A bottom-up satisfaction feedback system should be established alongside the top-down development agenda to maintain public support. The Liberia Peace Building Office (PBO), which has effectively tracked progress towards peace, should enhance its focus on monitoring citizen satisfaction. This shift will help create a more people-centered ARREST agenda and ensure that government actions are consistently aligned with the needs and expectations of the citizens.

IMPLEMENTING A DASHBOARD FOR TARGETED ACTION

To operationalize these recommendations, a data-driven dashboard is crucial for visualizing the factors shaping civic satisfaction and intergroup relations across Liberia. This tool will highlight key regional indicators, guiding localized interventions and offering real-time insights into regional strengths and vulnerabilities. Serving as a critical Monitoring & Evaluation tool, the dashboard will track progress on the ARREST agenda and inform adjustments to policies, ensuring that interventions remain responsive to the needs of the population. This will empower the new administration to execute the ARREST agenda with precision and effectiveness, grounded in evidence-based decision-making.

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Annex I: Methodology

Data for the Liberia SCORE 2023 was collected between December 2023 and March 2024 across the country, with a total sample size of 3,844. Data for 2021 was collected between January and March 2021 across the country, with a total sample size of 3,874. Data for 2018 was collected between February and March 2018 across the country, with a total sample size of 6,206 respondents. Data is representative of age, gender and county, and was collected using quantitative face-to-face interviews.

Sample distribution in 2023			
		(n)	(%)
Age Groups	18 - 24	466	12.1%
	25 - 34	903	23.5%
	35 - 54	1845	48.0%
	55 & more	630	16.4%
Gender	Male	1930	50.2%
	Female	1914	49.8%
Urbanity	Rural	1855	48.3%
	Semi-rural	1297	33.7%
	Urban	692	18.0%
County	Bomi	271	7.0%
	Bong	260	6.8%
	Gbarpolu	256	6.7%
	Grand Bassa	260	6.8%
	Grand Cape Mount	262	6.8%
	Grand Gedeh	260	6.8%
	Grand Kru	180	4.7%
	Lofa	258	6.7%
	Margibi	261	6.8%
	Maryland	184	4.8%
	Montserrado	419	10.9%
	Nimba	280	7.3%
	River Cess	235	6.1%
	River Gee	195	5.1%
	Sinoe	263	6.8%

Notes

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