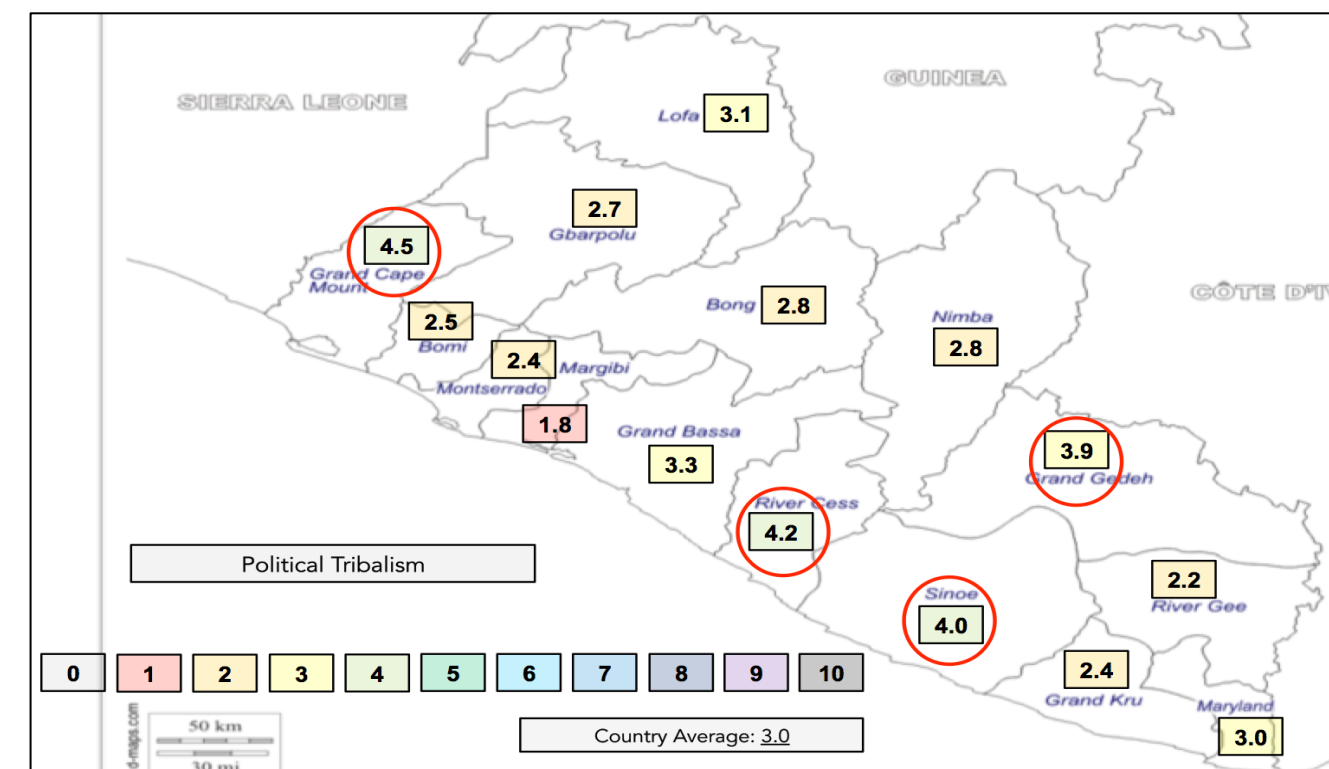


SCORE LIBERIA DRAFT POLICY BRIEF

Addressing Political Tribalism

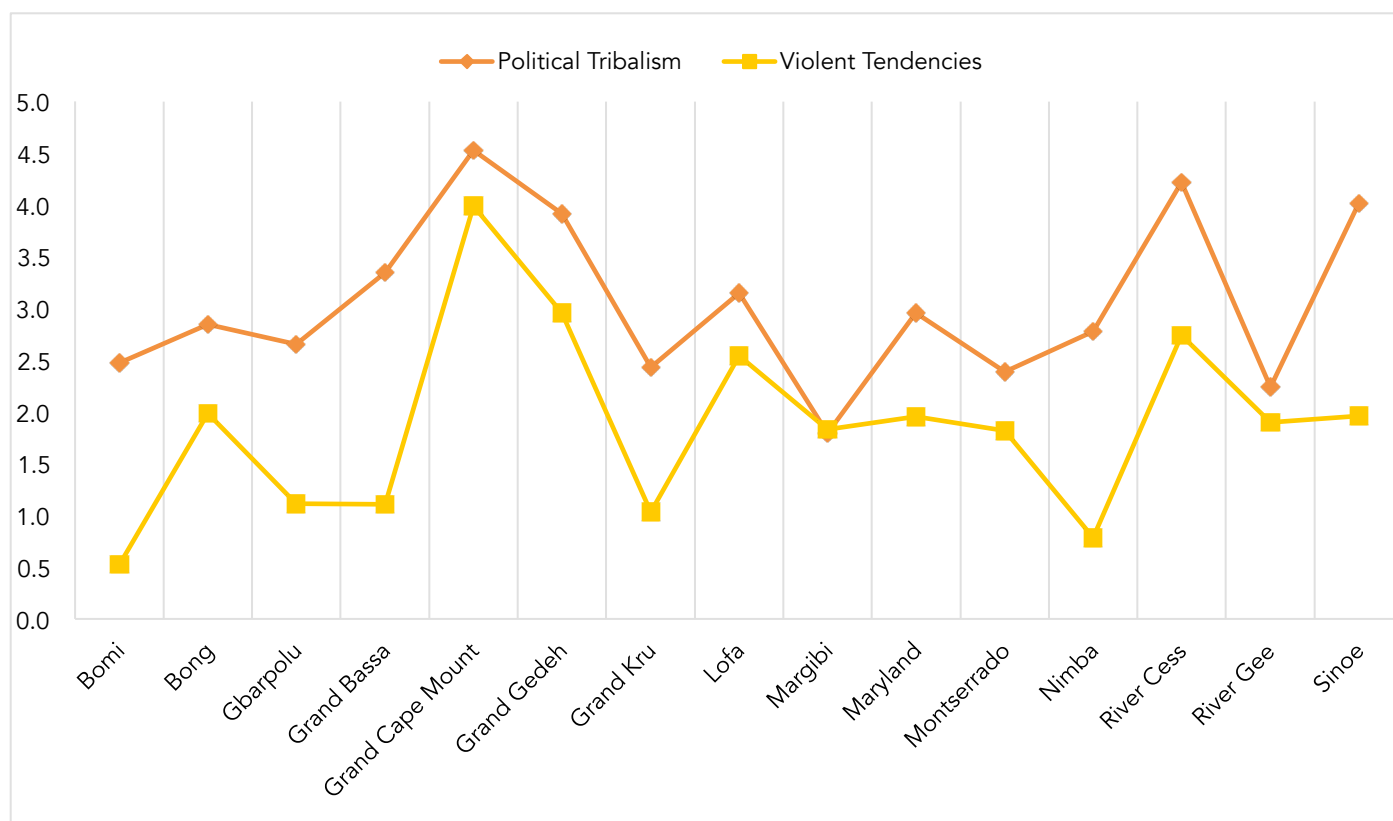
SCORE Liberia was launched in April 2016. Following the qualitative calibration of the methodology to the Liberian context, the quantitative fieldwork was completed in January 2017. The underlying objectives of the research are to understand the dimensions and indicators, and to collect empirical data relevant to the nature of social cohesion and coexistence in Liberia. SCORE can help identify hotspots, diagnose risks and understand the predictors of violence, which is of utmost importance at this current juncture, with the upcoming presidential elections and ongoing draw-down of UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Considering the strong correlation between violent tendencies and political tribalism revealed by the analysis, one of the key outcomes of interest for SCORE was Addressing Political Tribalism.

Tribalism plays a significant role in the socio-political life of Liberia. Particularly after the 1980s, Liberian society witnessed a rise in political tribalism after 1980 following the civil war. The term tribalism can be broadly understood as referring to attitudes and behaviour that stem from strong loyalty to one's own ethno-linguistic group. SCORE research findings distinguish ethnic tribal identities from political tribalism. Although there is some overlap, while ethnic tribalism is closely linked to ethnic identity, which is about ethno-cultural belonging, political tribalism is about politicization of tribal identities that can lead to polarization and inter-tribal rivalries, and has a strong correlation with authoritarian political values. Specifically, political tribalism refers to loyalty to 'tribal hierarchies and traditional way of life' instead of 'democratic governance structures and values'.¹ The national average score for the political tribalism indicator is 3.0 on a scale from 0 (no political tribalism) to 10 (strong political tribalism). The heat map below shows meaningful variation in political tribalism on the county level. Margibi exhibits the lowest average extent of political tribalism, while Grand Cape Mount, River Cess, Sinoe and Grand Gedeh have average scores that are markedly higher (circled in red) than the national average.

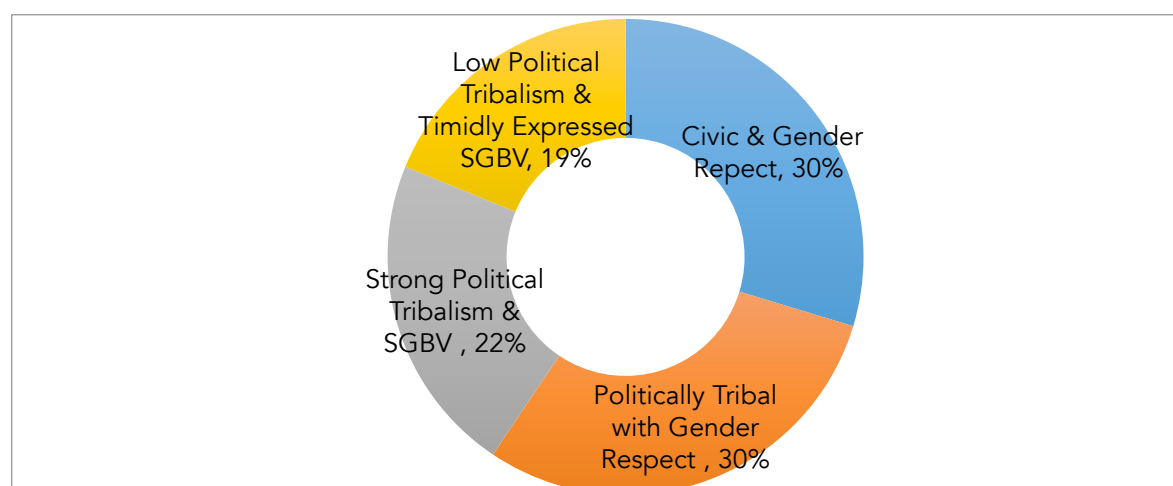


¹ Political tribalism indicator assesses attitudes towards and perceptions loyalty to tribal elders vs. central government, land reform and provision of justice and security.

Additional analysis reveals that political tribalism tends to be stronger among older and rural respondents, but weaker among educated, urban and higher income respondents. Another important finding is a correlation between political tribalism and violent tendencies, including political violence propensity (i.e. endorsement of violence as a means to achieve political change), aggression in daily life (i.e. aggressive attitudes towards disputes and conflict at an individual level), and endorsement sexual and gender-based violence (S/GBV) (i.e. endorsement of domestic violence). Meanwhile, no link between ethnic/religious identity and violent tendencies is observed in the data.

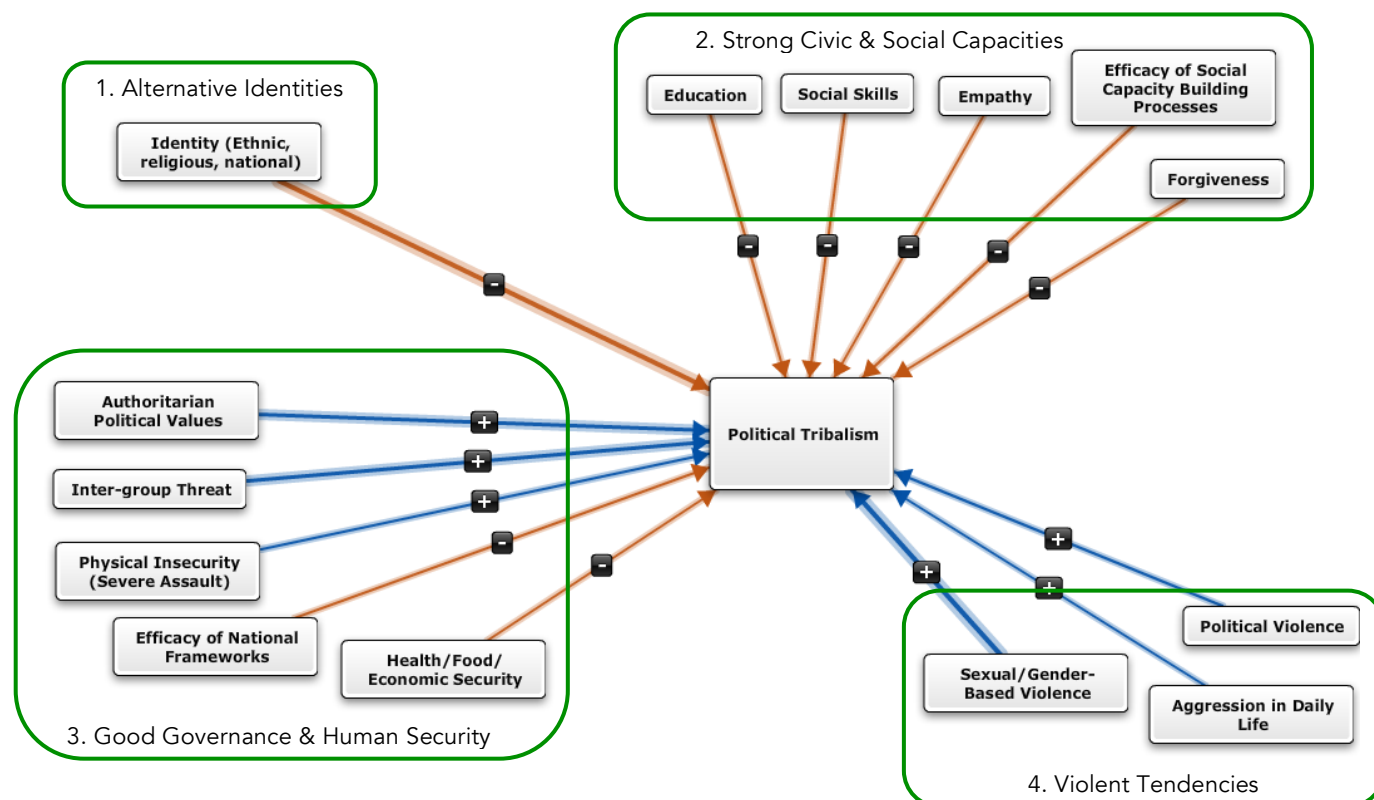


Of note, respondents can be differentiated into four groups with respect to their attitudes of political tribalism and their orientations toward S/GBV – see the figure below. The two largest groups are roughly the same size. One has low levels of political tribalism and aversion to S/GBV, and the other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



The SCORE findings also demonstrate that ethnic tribal identities can coexist with the all-embracing Liberian national identity. Further, ethnic, national, and religious identities do not inevitably lead to political tribalism, but in fact, they inhibit violent tendencies by providing a sense of community and belonging. Reducing political tribalism without undermining ethnic identities is imperative not simply because this tribalism is strongly correlated with violent tendencies, but also because limiting such tribalism would help consolidate democratic institutions and values in Liberia.

The SCORE predictive analysis identified four main groups of indicators that have strong relationships with political tribalism. The thickness of the arrows in the diagram below indicate the strength of the relationship: the thicker the arrow, the stronger the relationship. The colours of the arrows convey the nature of the relationship: **blue** arrows correspond to indicators that positively contribute to political tribalism, whereas **orange** arrows correspond to indicators that undermine/inhibit political tribalism.



A separate policy brief focuses on violent tendencies, a topic that warrants closer attention as a central consideration of conflict prevention activities. Therefore, we do not discuss the results of the analysis of violent tendencies further here. Alternative identities were found to be influential in the equation of political tribalism. However, interventions to reinforce ethnic and religious identities is neither an ethical nor practical as an entry point for policy. Thus, we do not discuss these results further either. Instead, we concentrate on the results pertaining to the other two main groups of indicators, which have significant potential to yield insights germane to policymaking and programming.

Strong Civic & Social Capacities is a group of indicators that help inhibit political tribalism and nurture constructive and positive civic behaviour. In descending order of relationship strength, the indicators that undermine political tribalism in this group are as follows:

Education: The longer respondents have spent in formal schooling, the less likely these respondents are to express strong political tribalism. Thus, improving access to education would act as a preventive factor.

Social Skills (e.g., meeting new people, being flexible in social situations and feeling comfortable in initiating conversations): Developing social skills would allow people to challenge or escape political tribalism.

Efficacy of Social Capacity-Building Processes (e.g., youth empowerment and addressing S/GBV): Respondents who feel that they are included, empowered, represented, heard and cared for are less likely to express political tribalism.

Empathy: This indicator refers to the ability to place oneself in another's position to understand their perspective and/or feel what the other person is experiencing. Strong empathy traits in respondents impede political tribalism.

Forgiveness: This indicator refers to the extent individuals feel the way to resolve a dispute is by forgiving, rather than taking revenge. Orientations toward forgiveness are an inhibiting indicator for political tribalism.

Good Governance & Human Security: When respondents perceive the governance structures to be corrupt, inefficient or inaccessible, or when they feel insecure in their daily lives, these respondents are more likely to turn to tribal leaders and elders as providers of basic community services and security. Bad governance and human insecurity shifts citizens' loyalties and belonging away from the central national institutions, and hence tends to reinforce political tribalism. When democracy fails to deliver its promise of good governance, security and prosperity, the democratic process becomes compromised, with citizens reacting by withdrawing from public spaces and turning to the authority of non-state actors – potentially tribal leaders. In descending order of relationship strength, indicators in this group are as follows:

Authoritarian Politics (e.g., preference for non-democratic systems of governance and a single heavy-handed leader to make all the decisions) is a strong indicator for political tribalism. Especially in countries where democratic institutions are not efficient and consolidated, authoritarian politics may look more appealing due to their hierarchical effectiveness. The authoritarian and tribal political convictions do not promote inclusive and participatory decision-making, but rather shift all loyalty and agency to a single leader.

Intergroup Threat refers to the extent to which individuals consider their own group's way of life to be potentially threatened by adversarial groups. Perceiving such a threat is a strong indicator that reinforces political tribalism. When individuals feel threatened, they tend to withdraw into their closest groups/communities, reproducing their in-group identity and bonds, in defence. Hence, they are more likely to turn to tribal leaders and elders as providers of security.

Victims of Severe Assault are more likely to experience PTSD, withdrawal from social and public life, and insecurity. Hence, they can be expected to tend to turn to tribal leaders and elders as providers of security and support to alleviate their vulnerability.

Efficacy of National Frameworks (e.g., Governance Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, and County Peace Committees) has a strong negative relationship with political tribalism. Respondents who express trust in government and governmental institutions and feel that they are representative, caring and non-corrupt, are less likely to exhibit attitudes of political tribalism. The findings reveal a prevalent lack of trust towards key state organs such as executive, judiciary and legislature. In contrast, religious leaders, civil society and traditional authorities enjoy stronger standing and legitimacy among Liberians.

Economic Health/Food Security refers to freedom from poverty, disease and hunger (e.g., malnutrition, deadly infectious diseases, lack of access to basic health care). Intuitively, traditional state security cannot be attained without human security, and vice versa. Thus, not having basic human security undermines perception of good governance and security, with the effect of shifting loyalties to tribal leaders.

Policy Recommendations

In the short and medium term, the SCORE predictive analysis reveals that focusing on good governance, effective security provision (e.g. policing) and improving human security would be policy entry points with the highest likelihood of positive impact that can help reduce political tribalism. For the long run, policies aimed promoting inclusive education experiences, incorporating peace education, and improving social healing processes as well as developing social skills and capacities could be incorporated into programming and strategies. Using the predictive model illustrated above and matching the key policy entry points with county level analysis can help tailor efforts to where the need is strongest.

Policy Entry Points	Recommendations
Efficacy of social capacity-building processes	Design youth recovery and empowerment programmes such as promoting entrepreneurship, social, cultural and economic activities to improve youth participation and inclusion; Design psychosocial recovery and empowerment programmes such as counselling and support for victims of S/GBV and severe assault, to give women a role in national reconciliation and improve women's participation and inclusion socio-politically and economically in Sinoe, Grand Gedeh, Grand Cape Mount. More specifically, 65% in Grand Cape Mount report that no progress has been achieved in terms of conflict prevention and mediation processes that are aimed at rebuilding capacity for nonviolent conflict resolution and dialogue in local communities; and similarly, 65% also report that no progress has been achieved in terms of promoting a transformative education system aimed at fostering a shared future, break barriers between groups, and socialize future generations in the use of dialogue and nonviolent actions.
Efficacy of National Frameworks	Ensure sustainability of decentralized government systems and structures and develop grassroots participation and engagement mechanisms at the county level for the implementation of the Strategic Roadmap for National Healing, Peace Building and Reconciliation in Sinoe, River Cess, Grand Cape Mount; and develop communication strategies and outreach programmes about national frameworks in Grand Cape Mount, Sinoe, Nimba, Lofa and River Cess. More specifically, almost 90% in Grand Cape Mount and 70% in Sinoe report that Land Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission and Reconciliation Roadmap has not helped to strengthen peace and state building. On the other hand, over 50% in Lofa, Nimba and Sinoe report that the Governance Commission has not helped to strengthen peace and state building.
Address intergroup threat & foster forgiveness	Investing in dialogue and healing processes would address perceptions of intergroup threat, as well as discriminatory attitudes, and hence improve intergroup relations and harmony. Building capacity for nonviolent communication, dialogue and healing processes and incorporating peace education into curricula can be effective ways of reducing intergroup threat and fostering forgiveness both at an individual and societal level. At a higher policy level, adopting public narratives that endorse forgiveness is recommended. These reconciliation efforts aimed at improving intergroup relationships should focus on reconciling Mandigos, Gios and other groups, including Muslims. Intensive reconciliation efforts should be tailored for for River Cess and River Gee.
Economic / Health / Food Security	Effective ways to improve human security can include multiple holistic approaches at the local level. These can include risk-sharing arrangements that pool membership funds and promote community-based insurance schemes; improving health

education, access to health care and safe water; promoting macroeconomic policy reform; and providing vocational training, microfinance technical assistance and capacity building for farmers and entrepreneurs. These approaches should specifically target Sinoe and Grand Cape Mount.

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

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



More information can be found at SCORE Online Platform: www.scoreforpeace.org.

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