

Chapter 32

Growing Hope: How Urban Gardens Are Empowering War-Affected Liberians and Harvesting a New Generation of City Farmers

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Abstract This chapter details the stories of women who survived Liberia’s brutal civil war and turned to gardening as a means of rebuilding hope and ensuring food security. Despite limited space and resources, gardens arising in war-torn Liberia offer an example of greening in the red zone.

Keywords Gardens • Greening • Urban farming • Liberia • War

Freelance journalist Christina Holder relates the stories of women who survived Liberia’s brutal civil war and are now turning to gardening as a means of rebuilding hope and ensuring food security. Although plagued by limited space and resources, gardens arising amidst the rubble of post-war Monrovia offer an example of how wounded and marginalized individuals can self-organize to produce something of value to their families and community.

In the West African nation of Liberia, nearly 3.5 million people endured a brutal and terrifying civil war from 1989 until 2003. Years of economic instability, socio-economic divisions, and fierce power struggles among rival groups culminated in a coup d’état in 1980 and a full-blown civil war in 1989. Liberia was in ruins—and more than 200,000 people were dead—by the time the war ended 14 years later.

That is the quick, news version of Liberia’s war history. But war history is always much more complicated than a few opening sentences can relate. Many Liberians do not seem to spend a great deal of time thinking about how or why war happened. They want to know how to move forward in the midst of the devastation. I can write that because I have spent a lot of time listening to my Liberian friends. I arrived in Liberia in 2008—a year that also happened to mark the country’s 5-year peace,

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albeit upheld by the second largest United Nations' peacekeeping force in the world. I went there to tell the under-reported stories of war-affected Liberians and to report on the country's post-war development for newspapers in the United States. It is not often that American readers get an opportunity to read news about Liberia, and I hoped to change that.

I felt curiously drawn to people I had never met but whose stories I longed to tell. I knew that giving Liberians a voice would not heal them of the pains and injustices they had endured. But I believed it could propel them on a journey of healing. I believed their stories could motivate people to care about Liberia's post-war development. I believed that sharing my Liberian friends' stories was the first step in ensuring that the pain, the brutality, the injustices, and even the hope would not be covered up like the innocent buried in unmarked mass graves. In the spirit of Walt Whitman ('I sit and look out upon all the sorrows of the world, and upon all oppression and shame... All these—all ... the meanness and agony without end, I sitting, look out upon, See, hear, and am silent...'), I did not want to live in the silence.

On that first night, the plane taking me to Liberia's capital, Monrovia, glided through the darkness. The night covered up the wide green vistas of palm trees that in the day time would bake beneath a searing sun. It also cloaked the city scenes I would work in for the next year—the broken-down neighborhoods, the rampant poverty, the darkness and sickness resulting from a lack of stable infrastructure such as electricity and running water.

But even in the midst of a city recovering from war, I soon saw signs of hope. As I walked the neighborhood streets of Monrovia, I noticed paltry garden patches growing on sides of roads. I noticed vegetables sprouting in abandoned private lots, covering the fronts of houses where one would expect a lawn, popping from the dirty earth of junkyards. They seemed to burst like confetti that rises and falls in random places. I walked through a lot of abandoned cars and found a few vegetable sprouts mingling with the debris. In one neighborhood in Sinkor, a community on the outskirts of Monrovia, a Liberian woman planted leafy green vegetables called potato greens in front of her house along a dirt street. To a visitor, the foliage might have looked like landscaping instead of food. For those who lived in the house, the foliage meant there always was food no further than the front door. Each of these gardens is an example of greening in the red zone.

In a capital city where space is limited and being a farmer is stereotyped as being old-fashioned, I found that city dwellers were breaking apart stereotypes like a hoe turning soil and transforming once embattled roadsides into small green spaces. Interestingly, the gardens seemed to grow freely. It turns out that the Liberian government wasn't enforcing any codes for growing on government-owned right-of-ways. This could be, in part, attributed to the government's focus on rebuilding infrastructure. Who has time or money to regulate codes for vegetable gardens, when there is electricity and running water and sewer systems to be restored? But even the former Monrovia city police director, Emmanuel Crusoe, who served in the capital during the country's post-war years, sees growing city gardens as a way to foster independent living skills following so many years of war. For now, city gardens seem to be safe and even encouraged.

Roadside gardens are producing bounties beyond the harvests. While no one has published a scientific study on the psychological effects of growing a city garden in war-torn Liberia, the hope, empowerment and healing taking place in these green spaces is palpable. The gardens are feeding large, extended families living in tight, decrepit dwellings. They are producing income in a country where most people live on less than \$1 a day, according to World Bank statistics (Wolfowitz 2007). They are ushering in a new way of life for many people who feel as ruined as the city in which they live. They are allowing Liberians to go to sleep at night knowing the peace of their homeland and the confidence that comes with small steps toward self-sufficiency in a fertile nation that has relied on food aid from humanitarian organizations for 20 years.

Liberia's Tangled Roots of War

Liberia's roots reach far into the United States' soil. Free-born black Americans officially founded the country in 1822 when they sailed to West Africa to escape the persecution they had endured under the oppressive rule of slavery in the United States. But instead the cycle of oppression continued. Some black American settlers, who would come to be known as Americo-Liberians, began oppressing the native Liberians. This led to years of tension between the two groups. Those explosive elements mixed with the other weighty troubles in the country such as widespread poverty, tribal rivalries, economic instability and ongoing power struggles.

Divisions grew among Americo-Liberians and native Africans throughout Liberia's early years, but organized violence did not erupt until the 1970s during an uprising known as the 'rice riots'. William Tolbert, an Americo-Liberian who served as president for 27 years, died while in office. Vice president William Tubman assumed the presidency. Tubman, like Tolbert, was an Americo-Liberian. But Tubman tried a new approach to governing. He was the 'first president to speak an indigenous language', writes Peter Dennis of The International Center for Transitional Justice, 'and he promoted a program to bring more indigenous persons into the government'. The following passage, excerpted from Dennis' *A Brief History of Liberia*, describes what happened next:

Unfortunately, this initiative lacked support within Tolbert's own administration, and while the majority felt the change was occurring too slowly, many Americo-Liberians felt it was too rapid. In April 1979, a proposal to raise the price of rice (which the Tolbert administration subsidized) met with violent opposition. The government claimed that the price increase was meant to promote more local farming, slow the rate of urban migration, and reduce dependence on imported rice. However, opposition leaders also pointed out that the Tolbert family controlled the rice monopoly in Liberia and therefore stood to prosper. The ensuing 'rice riots' severely damaged Tolbert's credibility and increased the administration's vulnerability (Dennis 2006).

Liberia's rice riots led to increasing dissatisfaction among the country's indigenous people. By 1980, that dissatisfaction turned into brutal organized violence. A 27-year-old indigenous Liberian named Samuel K. Doe led a coup d'état against Tolbert's government. Doe and his followers executed Tolbert in the presidential

mansion and then took captive more than a dozen dignitaries, whom they tied to posts on a beach overlooking the Atlantic Ocean and fatally shot. By 1989, war had come to Liberia. Warlord and Americo-Liberian Charles Taylor launched a civil war to topple Doe and to take control of the country. A rival faction leader named Prince Johnson, who still serves in Liberia's Senate, captured Doe first. He drank a beer while watching his men brutally torture Doe, who wore underwear only. The execution once was available online, but now YouTube shows snippets of the capture only—of a pleading, tearful Doe—and leaves the rest to the viewer's imagination.

The Liberian civil war spread throughout the country, and rival factions formed and split as they fought against one another. Some of the most bizarre fighting in war history took place in Liberia, with soldiers wearing women's wigs and even wedding dresses as if they were playing a game of 'dress up'. Soldiers from many rival groups fought until shortly after Taylor—who gained the presidency in 1997—fled the country in 2003. By then, the country had turned into a wasteland. There wasn't any electricity or running water. An estimated 200,000 people died while tens of thousands became refugees.

In 2005, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf became Africa's first democratically-elected female president. (About 8 years earlier, she had garnered only 9.6 % of the vote while Taylor took 75.3 % according to PBS Online NewsHour, Schecter (2009)), Under her leadership, street lights and running water have returned slowly to parts of Monrovia and to other cities. For the country's Independence Day celebration in 2009, she lit up the third largest city in Liberia, Gbargna, which is located about 3 hours northeast of the capital.

But Liberians continue living in the shadows of a complex history. At the time of writing this chapter, it has been more than 6 years since the country's protracted civil war ended. The world's second largest United Nations peacekeeping force—nearly 10,000 strong—keeps watch while the national police force patrols dark neighborhoods without guns due to the country's 2003 disarmament. Johnson-Sirleaf has asked the United Nations to stay longer than their 2010 mandate for fear of unrest in the country leading up to the 2011 presidential election. There are many uncertainties and fears rooted in the minds of Liberians. They continue to be haunted by the trauma of war—living with undiagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder—and fearing the return of chaos and bloodshed. Today, Taylor is being held in The Hague, where he has been since June 20, 2006. He is being tried on 11 counts of war crimes against humanity related to the civil war in neighboring Sierra Leone, which roughly coincided with Liberia's war. Prosecutors say that Taylor was the mastermind behind arming Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front in exchange for diamonds. His trial makes for hot debate on the streets of Liberia's cities—with those vying for both his acquittal and imprisonment. Meanwhile, Taylor still has not been tried for any crimes related to war in his country.

Roadside Gardens: A Look at Liberia's New City Farmers

When Wata King thinks about her country's 14-year civil war, she sees the flies. They swarm over dead bodies on a dusty road, sown like seeds in the dirt from where they came and where they will return. Wata walks that dusty road in her mind. She scavenges for food with only one good eye—her left—for her three small children and her husband. Her right eye was battered by shrapnel twisting in the mad acrobatics of war. Today, she can only see shadows in an eye that would have been sharp had it not been for the war.

In Wata's memory, however, shadows do not exist. Everything is in focus. Wata begins her daily hunt for food in the darkness—a time Liberians call 'soon in the morning'—and walks all day from village to village. The moments turn into miles along the dusty road. She sees dead bodies 'all over'—on the road and in the water. This is her war experience.

Some people just give up, she tells me one day as I sit with her outside the concrete house she shares with several families. 'They take one or two steps ... They would rather die than to go', she says. Going back home empty-handed to her children was especially 'sorrowful', she says. 'Sometime you go and come back, you can't see nothing', she tells me.

Wata's immediate family was blessed: no one died of hunger. But she has not forgotten the long days of scavenging and the pangs of hunger. 'I just thank God. Because through God, [he] made me to survive. Because other people died innocently'. With the memory of hunger still in her mind, today Wata is taking control of her family's food security. As Liberia slowly recovers from the war, she is putting her hands into the soil. In 2009, Wata began growing a garden of leafy greens on the roadside across from the house where she lives on the bustling perimeter of Monrovia. City gardens in Monrovia are filled with corn, cassava (similar to a potato), and potato greens (a leafy plant similar to spinach or collards). Potato greens can be grown from the plant's stem, which makes them an easy and inexpensive vegetable to cultivate. Wata planted the greens as an experiment to see if she could generate extra income and provide more food for her family of six.

Since the first roadside garden she planted across the street from her house about a year ago, she's replanted several times and earned a little extra income from selling part of her harvest. Having a small space and gardening without extra resources such as fertilizer sometimes leaves her with depleted soil and meager harvests. For now, Wata's roadside garden is an experiment in self-sufficiency. Gardening brings a sense of empowerment and hope. Wata's experience in scavenging for food during the war—and now her management of a roadside city garden—reinforce her duty to her family and to her own existence in post-war Liberia.

Down the road from Wata King's garden patch, an elderly Norah Quiqui tends a garden filled with a wide variety of Liberian staples. Norah is one of Liberia's many market women who sell vegetables in a nearby outdoor market. Her son, Lawrence, 29,



Fig. 32.1 Norah Quiqui's roadside garden in Sinkor, a community on the outskirts of Liberia's capital city of Monrovia (Courtesy of Christina Holder, freelance journalist)

runs a photo booth near Norah's bushy street-corner patch. In 2009 and later in 2010, the large garden, filled with corn and leafy greens called cassava leaf, was flanked by random clots of trash and an abandoned yellow taxi. This is typical of many gardens here that are planted in the dilapidated pockets of Monrovia (Fig. 32.1).

Lawrence, Norah's son, says he is thankful for his mother's gardening. He says he remembers going to bed hungry often during the war. Growing vegetables has helped not only feed the Quiqui's extended family, but it has helped to put Lawrence and his six siblings through school. During the war, Norah experienced hunger and hardship. Her husband passed away due to a suspected heart attack. But she thanks God for the two most often quoted praises in post-war Liberia: survival and sustenance. 'They buying. We eating. That way alright', she says. 'We don't want war. I scared for the war. No war, I happy'.

In 2010, Mamie Rogert's garden patch looked like a yard full of grass stretching wide from the concrete house she lives in with friends in a neighborhood on the outskirts of Monrovia. She has been growing a garden full of leafy green vegetables and corn there for about 3 years and has turned the patch into a business that helps to feed her and her four children. She can make about 1,500 liberty dollars (LD), the equivalent of about 22 USD and about 16 Euros, per harvest. If a Liberian city farmer is able to plant at least once a month, he or she can make almost enough to buy at least one, 110-lb or 50-kg bag of rice, which was selling for about \$28 in April 2010. Most Liberians, however, buy rice by the cup—which often is measured

in an empty soup can. A ‘cup’ costs about 12 cents. It takes a few weeks only for vegetables like potato greens to grow during Liberia’s rainy season, which begins in April and lasts until November. Therefore, if a city farmer can find a wide space in the city, such as a plot of earth behind a house or in an abandoned lot, then his or her possibilities for making income increase.

Greening in Liberia’s red zone also is leading to community building. In the same neighborhood where Rogert lives is a collective of five women who garden together. Mapu Blackie, Mama Kollie, Ma-tuma Koromah, Massay Sabah and Bendu Washington do not know their ages, but they are likely nearing or in their 60s. They plant cassava leaf, onions and another leafy vegetable called water greens. When they have harvested, the women share the produce for eating and selling. ‘That’s my garden helping me’, Mapu says. They have risen as both entrepreneurs and symbols of self-sufficiency in their neighborhood. When neighbors do not have food, they come to the women for help.

Wata, Norah, Mamie and the women’s gardening collective represent just a handful of Monrovia city farmers who are trying to forge a new life for themselves through green spaces in the midst of Liberia’s red zone. They are not always making a significant amount of money from their garden harvests. However, anecdotally, these women’s stories make a significant contribution to our understanding of the current challenges in post-war Liberia—and the desire of these women to move into post-war lifestyles that are stable and self-sufficient. Furthermore, it is significant that these city farmers are women. While both men and women garden and farm in Liberia, the World Bank’s 2007 study *Comprehensive Assessment of the Agriculture Sector in Liberia* reports that women play a dominant role in the country’s agricultural sector. Women constitute 53 % of the country’s agricultural labor force and are responsible for producing 60 % of all the country’s agricultural products, according to the World Bank report. Furthermore, the income earned by Liberian women ‘has an important role in ensuring family welfare and fighting poverty’ because it often is ‘spent in household’s basic needs and education in higher proportions than male earned income’, according to the report.

Rachel J. Slater also noted the positive social and psychological effects of gardening on women’s lives through her recording of life histories of 14 women living in post-apartheid South African townships. In her 2001 article, Slater concluded that South African women who maintained gardens gained a sense of identity, empowerment and peace in their green spaces:

Many women find solace from both trauma and the daily stresses of township life through their gardens—a kind of empowerment process not found in the literature. Furthermore, through gardening they become conscious of different domains of society over which they can wield power or control. In the context of powerlessness, women turn to the one thing over which they can exact control—their gardens. The garden becomes a site of resistance to societal constraints. Through gardening, women find something tangible, meaningful and productive that they can do. With each cabbage, onion or potato that they grow successfully, they are chipping away at the problems and the desolation or hopelessness they feel in their situation. It is empowering to be able to take yourself away somewhere, to a place that is your own, and be alone with your thoughts, hopes and fears. It is empowering to find space where you have control and can make your own decisions (Slater 2001).

Perhaps female farmers in Liberia are also creating opportunities to experience both empowerment and healing within their city’s small, green spaces.

Meager Harvests: The Challenges to Food Security

Many refugees fled fighting in remote areas of the country and set up their new homes in Monrovia. A third of Liberia's estimated 3.5 million people live in Monrovia, according to the country's latest census, which was completed in March 2008 (Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services 2009). Transplanted Liberians brought their farming lifestyle with them—but found they did not have enough space to cultivate a real farm. The compromise is a roadside garden wherever the soil is deep and wide enough to plant.

City gardening is likely to continue sprouting as a way to generate food in the midst of Liberia's rising rice prices. Johnson-Sirleaf has been trying to encourage Liberians to get their hands into the soil. She launched a 'sensitization program' aimed at getting 'all Liberians to go back to the soil', according to press release from Johnson-Sirleaf's Executive Mansion (2008). Essentially, the government encouraged Liberians to try gardening and to consider moving out of the city to farm. The government also has funded seed banks in more remote areas of the country and gives Liberians who are experimenting with gardening and farming starter plants of the country's staple foods for free. The Ministry of Agriculture has developed an extension program that allows Liberian gardeners and farmers access to Ministry experts. Those experts will visit the plots and give gardeners and farmers tips on how to get better returns from the soil. Noting the importance of farming to Liberia's post-war future, the Ministry of Agriculture in partnership with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) launched a School Garden Program that trains high school and university instructors in vegetable production, according to a news article in the *Liberian Observer* (2010). The hope is that the instructors will grow school gardens that will ignite an interest for agriculture among students.

As Liberians look to the future and consider gardening as part of their post-war lives, there are many challenges to sustaining agriculture in the city. The challenges sometimes clash with benefits and make it harder for Liberians to pursue gardening and farming. Emmanuel Crusoe, the former Monrovia city police director, says that many Monrovia do not participate in gardening as a way to generate a main source of income because they have lived in the fast-paced city for most of their lives. City dwellers are not farmers, he says. There also is evidence that there is a negative stereotype associated with becoming a farmer. 'Farming does not seem to hold the same status as professions in the city do', says Jennifer Gerson, an American dietician who lived in Liberia for 5 years and worked with city-dwelling Liberians on gardening techniques. 'It seems like a lower class especially to the younger generations'. These attitudes could be factors as to why more Liberians are not embracing city gardening.

Land constraints, theft and wait times are other big obstacles to city gardening. It is difficult to convince some Liberians to try gardening or farming because one must convince them to wait for a harvest when they could be making money as petty traders, says World Food Program's Liberia Program Officer Amos Ballayan. Gerson, the dietician, told me in a 2010 interview that she found it challenging to convince Liberians that gardening could be a sustainable enterprise. It was expensive to obtain tools, seeds, and other necessary equipment for managing a garden. Then, theft was

a big concern for many potential gardeners—not only theft of supplies but also of the crops ready to be harvested. ‘There were many people who were frustrated in their efforts... They didn’t have adequate security for their gardens and suffered losses. Some gave up’, she says. The women’s gardening collective also has experienced theft of their crops.

Yet another challenge was finding adequate space and soil to plant a sustainable garden. Because there isn’t a neighborhood trash collection system in place in post-war Liberia, most people bury their trash in the soil. When Gerson began preparing her garden at her home in Liberia—a model plot where she experimented with gardening techniques that she later shared with Liberians—she had a difficult time getting started. ‘You find tons of glass, plastic and tin cans in the ground’, she says. ‘At one site we actually found an old car buried by the rebels’.

Many Liberians do not want to move to more rural parts of the country, even if it means more growing space. ‘Everybody now knows that Monrovia is Liberia’, Crusoe says. ‘Everybody wants to be in Monrovia to make a living’. Wata King does not want to move away, but she does want to grow a larger garden. She would like to have a patch big and fertile enough that it starts yielding a regular income. For now, however, she’s willing to experiment and to carefully tend the garden with her one good eye. After so many years of war and hunger, she knows what it feels like to have things taken by force, and so she is embracing the freedom she has right now. ‘People walking, they taking people from among you. Walking. ‘Hey you, come here’. *Pow! Pow!* Hey you, come here. They kill you’, Wata remembers. In post-war Liberia, she feels proud to have this small, dignified garden of her own.

Extra Hands: Toiling Alongside World Humanitarian Organizations

Several world humanitarian organizations in Liberia are targeting farming projects in the country. But to my knowledge, they all are focused on the physical survival of the farmer and her or his family—and not on psychological healing. Liberians face widespread undiagnosed post-traumatic stress disorder. In a country with meager agricultural returns, it is perhaps the potential for healing—rather than income—that is more ripe for those who slip their hands into the soil.

Most farming projects sponsored by humanitarian organizations are located in remote parts of the country, where Liberians are familiar with the traditions of farming and perhaps ease into the arduous work because of that familiarity. Several organizations, however, are targeting city farming. The United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is hoping to expand the reach of more urbanized gardens. A new project, funded by the Swedish International Development Corporation Agency (SIDA), currently is targeting 5,000 urban residents of five major counties in Liberia (Integrated Regional Information Networks 2010). The goal of the project is to motivate Liberians to not only grow gardens but to surpass subsistence gardening and to start ‘market gardens’, according to a news article by the Integrated Regional

Information Networks, a project of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. FAO provides seeds and farming training but not tools, fertilizer or insecticides. Most of the farming done in Liberia is called ‘slash and burn’. Liberian farmers burn a field to clear it for farming. After a few harvests, they move on, says Gerson, the dietician, who spent time teaching Liberians how to build compost piles and to diversify crops to replenish soil with essential nutrients. ‘They had no idea that adding organic matter back into the soil can provide nutrients for future crops and ultimately increase the sustainability of farming that plot of land’, she told me in a 2010 interview.

Reverend Priscilla Jaiah, a native Liberian who went to the United States during the war and since has returned, has had some success in encouraging her fellow Liberians to grow vegetable gardens. In 2009, she began growing a large vegetable garden in the backyard of her house in Ganta, the country’s second largest city, and introduced Liberians to vegetables they have not typically eaten such as lettuce and green beans. In 2010, Jaiah has continued to grow the garden and has employed Liberians to help her with the small harvests. The Liberians who participated have experienced pride and confidence as they have benefited from the fruits of their labors. Some have even started their own gardens.

Conclusion: The Seeds of the Future

It is too early to determine whether Liberia’s urban gardens will lead to the significant social and psychological changes—such as lowering crime rates—that have sprouted in green spaces in other red zones (Kuo and Sullivan 2001). However, it certainly is possible. As Liberia’s government grows stronger and is able to institute more social programs that organize youth and put men and women to work, urban gardening and city farmers may become part of a larger, organized movement that leads to healing from war trauma, community empowerment and entrepreneurship, and food and income security. As Okvat and Zautra (Chap. 5, this volume) and Tidball (Chap. 4, this volume) have pointed out, engaging in activities that lead to positive emotions is critical to mental health in a crisis or stressful situation. Okvat and Zautra’s review of community gardening and other greening literature provides yet another perspective on the psychological changes that can take place in green spaces. Individuals who work together to turn soil and harvest crops in disaster areas may experience benefits such as positive moods and the ability to feel relaxed, improved self-esteem, and actual healing within a community where reflecting on trauma becomes a shared experience.

Organizations that have set up ‘healing gardens’ in countries that have a similar past to Liberia’s may have a role in Liberia’s greening in the red zone. The Garden of Forgiveness is a New-York based educational non-profit that teaches the public about forgiveness as a catalyst for healing. The organization does this by creating peaceful gardens where people can reflect and where community leaders can hold remembrance services. The organization is headed by Reverend Lyndon F. Harris,

who was the priest overseeing relief ministries at Ground Zero during the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, and Frederic Luskin, the co-founder and director of the Stanford University Forgiveness Project. The Gardens of Forgiveness project began in Beirut, Lebanon, and currently is working on plans for another garden in Rwanda, where genocide devastated the country. The Garden of Forgiveness is working with award-winning landscape architect, Julie Moir Messervy, author of *Contemplative Gardens* and *The Inward Garden*, on unique contemplative features for the garden that they hope will be a meeting place in the capital, Kigali. Harris said he would like to see such a garden in Liberia. As Winterbottom (Chap. 30 this volume) has described, landscape architects are sometimes ready to step into post-conflict settings, using design principles to help communities create gardens that facilitate learning, access to natural spaces that allow contemplation and safe play for children, and other elements that are known to help in healing and recovery in conflict settings.

In the meantime, small roadside gardens are important to Liberia's healing and reconstruction. They harvest empowerment, peace and healing. They appeal to an underserved demographic—women who are the main gatherers and producers of agricultural products but who remain the lowest paid. They are a unique part of the nation's post-war psychology. Roadside gardens foster independence and self-sufficiency because Liberians have taken it upon themselves to grow their own food rather than to rely on the government to institute an urban gardening plan. Gardens are forging new lives, and we can see those new lives reflected in every harvest among the ruins.

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