



## PHOTO & CAPTION

### Women Speak Out After Years of Silence



Photo: DAI/Edith C. Bawn

In the villages of Lofa County, Liberia, religious and tribal traditions have long maintained a culture in which men dominate all aspects of public life. The women of these villages had become accustomed to never speaking in public and always standing or walking behind the men.

As part of a larger USAID-funded community reconciliation project to help Liberia emerge from years of violent conflict, people

***A head woman, with a loudspeaker and several microphones before her, speaks out publicly after a local resolution to end discrimination against women was made.***

from the village of Barkedu discussed longstanding practices that discriminated against women. Afterwards, women of the Loma and Mandinka tribes declared they would “no longer walk behind the men, but alongside them.” The women of Barkedu declared a resolution to end tribal discrimination against women, encouraging women to speak in public.

This effort is part of a USAID-funded project that is making great strides towards reintegrating former combatants into society and achieving reconciliation between communities through traditional cleansing practices. Tribal chiefs, elders, women, and psycho-social specialists have helped to incorporate traditional interventions and healing ceremonies into the program to support peace and reconciliation.