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Education and Fragility in Liberia

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Acknowledgements

The Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) is an open global network of representatives from NGOs, UN agencies, donor agencies, governments, academic institutions, schools and affected populations working together within a humanitarian and development framework to ensure the right to quality and safe education in emergencies and post-crisis recovery to all persons.

About the INEE Working Group on Education and Fragility

The INEE Working Group on Education and Fragility (2008–2011) consists of 20 member agencies:

- Academy for Educational Development (AED)
- Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid)
- CARE
- Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
- Center for International Education at the University of Massachusetts
- Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution
- CfBT Education Trust
- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)
- Education Development Center (EDC)
- European Commission (EC)
- Fast Track Initiative (FTI) Secretariat
- Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Reach Out to Asia (ROTA), Qatar Foundation
- Save the Children Alliance
- UK Department for International Development (DFID)
- UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP)
- UNESCO Centre at the University of Ulster
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- US Agency for International Development (USAID)
- World Bank

For more information on the Working Group, contact educationfragility@ineesite.org or visit www.ineesite.org/educationfragility

Presentation of the IIEP Series

UNESCO is often asked to provide an educational response in emergency and reconstruction settings. The Organization continues to develop expertise in this field in order to be able to better prompt and relevant assistance. IIEP has been working most recently with the Global Education Cluster to offer guidance, practical tools, and specific training for education policy-makers, officials, and planners.

The UN General Assembly adopted, in July 2010, a resolution on the 'Right to education in emergency situations'. It recognizes that both natural disasters and conflict present a serious challenge to the fulfilment of international education goals, and acknowledges that protecting schools and providing education in emergencies should remain a key priority for the international community and Member States. The Dakar World Education Forum in 2000 explicitly focused on the rights of children in emergencies in the fifth of the 11 objectives it adopted. Governments, particularly education ministries, have an important role to play in an area that has often been dominated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and United Nations agencies.

In this regard, the field of educational planning in emergencies and reconstruction is still developing, and requires increased documentation and analysis. Accumulated institutional memories and knowledge in governments, agencies, and NGOs on education in emergencies are in danger of being lost due to high staff turnover in both national and international contexts. Most of the expertise is still in the heads of practitioners and needs to be collected while memories are fresh.

The IIEP series on Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction aims to document such information, and includes country-specific analyses on the planning and management of education in emergencies and reconstruction. These studies focus on efforts made to restore and transform education systems in countries and territories as diverse as Pakistan, Burundi, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Sudan, Kosovo, Timor-Leste, and Rwanda.

The situational analyses of education and fragility, produced in collaboration with the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), are the latest of IIEP's publications that seek to broaden the body of literature and knowledge in this field. These include a series of global, thematic, policy-related studies on topics including certification for pupils and teachers, donor engagement in financing and alternative education programmes. In addition, IIEP has published a *Guidebook for Planning Education in Emergencies and Reconstruction* for ministry of education officials and the agencies assisting them. In collaboration with UNICEF and the Global Education Cluster, IIEP is also developing specific guidance on how to develop education-sector plans in situations affected by crisis for a similar audience. Through this programme, IIEP will make a modest but significant contribution to the discipline of education in emergencies and reconstruction, in the hope of enriching the quality of educational planning processes in situations affected by crisis.

Khalil Mahshi
Director, IIEP

Contents

List of abbreviations

ACS	American Colonization Society
ALP	Accelerated Learning Program
ALPP	Accelerated Learning Program for Positive Living
CEO	County Education Office
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSR	Country Status Report
CWIQ	Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire
DEO	District Education Office
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
EC	European Commission
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESDC	Education Sector Development Committee
ESP	Education Sector Plan
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
GDP	gross domestic product
GoL	Government of Liberia
IFC	International Finance Corporation
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
iPRS	interim Poverty Reduction Strategy
JPYEE	Joint Program for Youth Employment and Empowerment
LEPF	Liberia Education Pooled Fund
LPERP	Liberian Primary Education Recovery Program
LTTP	Liberian Teacher Training Project
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOYS	Ministry of Youth & Sports
NCHE	National Commission for Higher Education
NGO	non-governmental organization
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPP	National Patriotic Party

NSC	National School Census
NTGL	National Transitional Government of Liberia
NYPAP	National Youth Policy Action Plan
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PRC	People's Redemption Council
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
PTAs	Parent-Teacher Associations
RTTIs	Rural Teacher Training Institutes
SMC	School Management Committee
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
TWP	True Whig Party
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WAEC	West African Examinations Council

Foreword to the situational analyses

The publications in this series are the result of a research project, 'Situational Analyses of Education and Fragility', carried out by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) Working Group on Education and Fragility. The four studies in the series – Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, and Liberia – have been synthesized into an overarching review that aims to identify key elements in the complex relationships between education and fragility.

The INEE Working Group on Education and Fragility was established in 2008 as an interagency mechanism to coordinate initiatives and catalyse collaborative action on education and fragility. Its goals are to:

- strengthen consensus on approaches to mitigate fragility through education, while ensuring equitable access for all;
- support the development of effective quality education programmes in fragile contexts; and
- promote the development of alternative mechanisms to support education in fragile contexts in the transition from humanitarian to development assistance.

In late 2008, the Working Group decided to undertake country case studies to further develop the evidence base necessary to understanding the role of education in either exacerbating or mitigating fragility.

One of the Working Group's first tasks was to clarify the concept of 'fragility'. The term evolved from the terminology 'fragile states'. The Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD-DAC) defines fragile states as those that have a limited capacity and/or political will to provide basic services to the population (OECD-DAC, 2008). The shift from 'fragile states' to 'fragility' reflects an attempt to avoid pejorative labels that might hinder diplomatic relations or assistance to such countries, as well as a more constructive approach to articulating the conditions of fragility, their causes, and their locations. This new focus no longer considers the state as the only unit of analysis – although its role remains critical. It also allows for a deeper exploration of the various causes (human and systemic) of a failure to provide basic services (security, justice, health, and education) to affected populations.

Fragile contexts are distinguished from non-fragile contexts principally by instability – political, economic, social – often coupled with the presence (or risk) of violent conflict. Any number or combination of the dynamics of fragility may characterize such contexts, including poor governance, repression, corruption, inequality and exclusion, and low levels of social cohesion. The four states examined in the situational analyses of education and fragility (Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, and Liberia) have all experienced, and continue to experience, instability, and/or prevalence of violence.

The relationship between education and fragility is dynamic and often mutually reinforcing. The numerous ways in which fragility can impact aspects of education (including access, quality, relevance, equity, and management) are well documented. There is also a deepening understanding of the impacts of education on fragility (in terms of exacerbation or mitigation).

However, additional evidence is needed to understand the complex dynamics of education in fragile contexts, and to determine the effectiveness of educational policies and programmes in reducing fragility.

Each of the four case studies presents an analysis of a *situation* of fragility. Their ultimate aim is to assist the development of recommendations for policy, planning, and programming strategies and best practice at the country level. All four studies used an 'Analytic Framework of Education and Fragility',[*] developed by the Working Group. This built on existing tools, such as the USAID Education and Fragility Assessment Tool and the Fast Track Initiative's (FTI) Progressive Framework. The analytic framework laid out common research questions to facilitate a process of (1) establishing the fragility context, (2) understanding the response to the fragility context, and (3) summarizing impact. The research analysed the interactions between education and fragility across five fragility domains (security, governance, economy, social, and environment), and against various aspects of education within four categories (planning, service delivery, resource mobilization, and system monitoring). The analytic framework was also intended to provide a base to develop a cross-comparison examination of all four situational analyses.

Yet, using the analytic framework as a methodological basis for the research proved challenging. In addition to being unwieldy, it failed to clarify the relationship between education and fragility for the researchers, each of whom interpreted the task and the framework in a different way.[**] Complex and abstract definitions of fragility, which proved difficult to operationalize, compounded the problem. Furthermore, the issue of discriminating the interlinking and cross-cutting dynamics between the five fragility domains made it difficult to develop measurable indicators, and thus methodologies and questionnaires. This led to differences in data collection between the countries, and complicated the cross-case analysis. It became apparent that a full understanding of fragility dynamics was necessary before beginning to tease out how education interacts and interfaces with indicators of fragility.

Due to this difficulty in establishing a shared analytic approach, the studies were less analytically consistent in terms of depth, focus, and quality than had been envisaged. The studies on Cambodia and Liberia, originally intended to be field-based, suffered more significantly from this lack of consistency, and therefore required bolstering with secondary literature.

However, despite the challenges, this synthesis of the four studies identifies emerging themes, commonalities, contrasts, and gaps in research on the relationship between education and fragility. IIEP hopes to use the knowledge garnered from the series to develop additional research and analytic tools for a wider audience.

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[*]   The analytic framework is available at:
www.ineesite.org/index.php/post/field-based_situational_analyses_of_education_and_fragility/

[**]   Independent researchers at IIEP-UNESCO and the University of Ulster developed the Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina studies respectively. The Working Group commissioned independent research teams for the fieldwork and development of the Cambodia and Liberia studies

Executive Summary

This publication on education and fragility in Liberia is part of a larger research project of the INEE Working Group on Education and Fragility involving three other country case studies: Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Cambodia. The aim of these 'Situational Analyses of Education and Fragility' is to strengthen the evidence for understanding the roles of education in exacerbating and/or mitigating fragility and, ultimately, to lead to the development of recommendations for policy, planning and programming strategies, and best practice both at country level and more broadly.

The purpose of the present report is to examine the impact of education on fragility in Liberia through a review of the drivers and dynamics of fragility, and the interaction of education with these drivers and dynamics. While primarily a desk study based on a review of secondary sources, this report also relies on information collected during a field visit to the country in September 2009 during which valuable insights were gathered through interviews with several key stakeholders.

Before moving to the core of its analysis on the interplays between education and fragility, the present report discusses Liberia's historical and current context of fragility. Covering the period between the founding of the modern Liberian state in 1822 and the aftermath of the 14-year-long civil war (1989–2003), the review of the historical context illustrates how Liberia has experienced a long history of political, social and economic fragility, and insecurity. It also shows that, with the end of overt and violent conflict in 2003, the country has committed itself to breaking with the past by embarking on intensive efforts at post-war reconstruction and development, as well as peacebuilding and reconciliation. This commitment is best outlined in the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) 2008–2012, which prioritizes four broad areas of activity: (1) enhancing national security, (2) revitalizing the economy, (3) strengthening governance and the rule of law, and (4) rehabilitating infrastructure and delivering basic services, including education (GoL 2008*a*).

The current context is then discussed by presenting a fragility analysis organized by five domains: security, economy, environment, governance, and social issues. Here it is shown that, despite some progress in these areas and in reaching the goals set in the PRS, challenges still remain. In particular, the contextual analysis shows that while overall physical security has stabilized over the last few years due to the various reforms, the current situation of 'peace' still appears to be fragile with economic, political, and social factors continuing to pose a considerable security threat.

Economic insecurity, above all, appears to have replaced physical insecurity as a primary concern for many Liberians, and to have become one of the main ongoing sources of fragility today. Traditionally based on a large and relatively undeveloped informal economy and subsistence agricultural sector, as well as a comparatively small formal economy that is highly dependent on exports of primary products, Liberia remains in fact one of the poorest and most highly indebted countries in the world.

Poor governance of state institutions is mentioned as being another ongoing source of fragility in Liberia. Historically, political power has been wielded in an exclusionary manner,

while public institutions have principally served the interests of the group in power rather than the common interest of the nation, hence undermining the legitimacy of and public trust in the government. Despite high levels of political will to break with the past and to act in the interests of all, public institutions are argued to continue to be weak due to persistent high centralization and concentration of power, high levels of corruption, and a lack of human and organizational capacity to address existing problems.

Social exclusion is also cited as another primary cause of fragility and said to be at the root of historical grievances. This paper argues that although current fragility is less a function of present-day exclusionary practices, the legacies of past exclusion continue to play out despite efforts by the current government to address them. As argued here, one important consequence of the history of exclusion and marginalization is the resultant weak sense of collective identity on the part of many Liberians. In this context, the social alienation experienced by the country's youth is cause for particular concern, especially as they comprise the majority of the population and the bulk of combatants during the civil war.

Following this contextual analysis, the report explores the relationship between the context of fragility and the education system in Liberia by presenting an education and fragility analysis. This analysis illustrates the challenges faced by the education sector in this specific fragile and post-war context, and its actual and potential role in either mitigating or exacerbating existing conditions of fragility.

The first section of this education and fragility analysis is dedicated to issues related to access and equality. Considering that socio-economic exclusion and marginalization were at the core of grievances that led to overt conflict in Liberia, and that education historically played a major role in perpetuating such patterns, this issue is argued here to be of particular importance. In recognition of this fact, the Liberian government placed high priority on providing access to education for all children, with a focus on disadvantaged groups. The analysis shows, however, that despite legal provisions and various promising actions, barriers to educational access still remain, disproportionately affecting certain groups and individuals, especially on the basis of income, as well as geographical location and gender. Continued low access to schooling is believed to have several negative implications in terms of fragility. First of all, limited access to schooling is likely to lead to poor economic prospects for uneducated and poorly educated children and youth. If coupled with disparities in provision and access, the lack of educational opportunities also runs the risk of both fuelling resentment and leading to instability. Secondly, besides allowing education to remain an instrument of privilege, poor access to schooling threatens the country's broad-based short- and long-term economic development by contributing to the low overall level of skills in Liberian society. Additionally, it is likely to weaken people's trust in the government's capacity and willingness to provide essential services.

The second section deals with educational opportunities for the youth. Liberia's youth – 45 per cent of whom are estimated to be illiterate and 80 per cent unemployed – is shown to have been particularly neglected. Resources and programming aimed to serve the education and livelihood needs of the youth are shown to have been so far woefully inadequate. Nevertheless, at present there are scattered programmes, such as the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) and Technical/Vocational Education and Training (TVET), but no consistent strategy has been put in place to serve the current needs of this group. Continued inadequate attention to the educational needs of Liberia's youth is also argued to have several negative implications for

fragility. First, left uneducated, unemployed and disengaged, and consequently economically and socially marginalized, the youth have the potential to represent an easy target for political mobilization, and therefore a major threat to security and stability. Furthermore, by failing to invest in educational opportunities for the youth, the positive potential of this large group to contribute to the country's political, economic, social, and cultural development runs the risk of being squandered.

The third section focuses on the quality and relevance of education. Here it is argued that simply being able to access education is not a sufficient condition in itself to guarantee the mitigation and prevention of fragility and conflict, and that the quality of educational provision is no less important. This paper argues that despite positive initiatives, Liberia's education system continues to be of poor quality. This is revealed and largely caused by several factors: teachers are poorly trained and often lack basic qualifications; the curriculum is outdated and of little economic and civic relevance; and textbooks, teachers' guides and other instructional materials are outdated and in short supply. Low quality education is believed to have the potential to compound some of the problems of existing fragility in all five domains, as well as dilute the positive effects education might have in mitigating fragility and conflict. In particular, low quality education is likely to fail to provide the skills needed for both individual and national development, as well as for preparing national leadership. Moreover, a barely literate population is likely to be more susceptible to the manipulative claims of political leaders than a better educated one. In addition, unequal distribution of quality education might have implications for the people's faith in the government's commitment to equity and fairness, and in the possibility of overcoming historical disadvantage and the effects of exclusion through education.

The fourth section tackles issues related to governance, management, and financing. The education sector is shown not only to have been greatly affected by overall poor governance but also to have reflected general patterns and trends in the concentration of power and lack of accountability, which have tended to favour mismanagement and corruption. This paper argues that the new government has shown its willingness to promote good governance in education. However, it also remarks that, while positive developments are most visible at the level of policy-making and planning, implementation continues to be hampered by limited financial and technical capacity at all levels. Strong and good governance, and management in education are argued to have important implications for fragility. First, issues of management are crucial for the full and effective implementation of educational policies and reforms geared towards addressing the fragility of the education sector. If the education sector is poor, governance in education might allow, on the one hand, patterns and dynamics of fragility to perpetuate both at the sectoral and the macro level and, on the other hand, lead to failure in exploiting the potential of a reformed sector to mitigate and counter political, economic and social aspects of fragility. Furthermore, given the vastness and visibility of this sector, good management in education is likely to have significant positive repercussions on the general improvement of governance in the country as a whole, as well as to build confidence among the people in the government's willingness and capacity to serve all Liberians.

In conclusion, this study shows that while there seems to be a high degree of political will to address the root causes and legacies of Liberia's longstanding history of fragility and insecurity, past patterns and trends have not yet been fully dealt with. Dynamics of fragility seem in fact to continue today in the five domains, comprising security, economy, environment, governance, and social issues. This study also shows that, in this overall context of fragility, the country's

education system has inevitably become fragile and, as a result, is faced with great challenges in rebuilding the system and in overcoming its fragility. By looking in particular at the four issues – access and equality; educational opportunities for the youth; quality and relevance; and governance, management and financing – this study concludes that despite the seemingly high level of commitment on the part of the government, the potential of education to mitigate and counter political, economic, and social aspects of fragility has not been adequately exploited, while its largely continuing state of fragility runs the risk of perpetuating patterns and dynamics of fragility both at the sectoral and the macro level.

Based on the prior analysis, this report concludes by suggesting a set of policy, planning, and programming recommendations to support education's role in stabilizing fragile contexts, and include:

- recognizing that weaknesses in the education system compound fragilities in other domains, and advocating for the role of education in building long-term sustainable peace;
- recognizing that reorienting the system towards more inclusive purposes is a long-term effort;
- increasing access to quality and relevant education, and addressing and explicitly tracking disparities;
- addressing the educational needs of the 'lost' generation that missed out on education, with a focus on the often neglected youth;
- improving governance in education by re-energizing decentralization efforts, and by better involving local communities;
- recognizing the current transitional state of the system and the evolution of balance between provision and support, and identifying development assistance modalities that support government as it develops strategic capacity;
- maintaining technical and financial support until institutions are able to function on their own.

It is hoped that by bringing to light the current interplays between education and fragility in Liberia and by suggesting ways to deal with them, this report will lead to positive actions in tackling these issues so that education mitigates fragility rather than exacerbates it.

1 Introduction

This publication is primarily a desk study based on a review of secondary sources, including academic literature, country- and project-specific reports by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donors, and statistical data from recent surveys.[1] The findings it presents are also partly based on information collected during a three-week field visit to Monrovia and five counties outside the capital in September 2009.[2] The aim of the field trip was to collect additional documents and statistical information, as well as to conduct interviews with knowledgeable insiders and key stakeholders (including government officials, representatives from the international community, and various community members) so as to gather a broad range of insights and perspectives on the context of fragility and its interaction with education from people who experience these dynamics on a daily basis.[3]

The booklet is organized into five sections. Following the Introduction, *Section 2* provides the historical context for the discussion of fragility in Liberia, covering the period between the founding of the modern Liberian state in 1822 and the aftermath of the civil war up to 2003. *Section 3* discusses the current situation by presenting a fragility analysis organized by five domains of fragility: security, economy, environment, governance and social issues. *Section 4* explores the relationship between this context of fragility and the education system in Liberia by presenting an education and fragility analysis. This analysis – focused on issues related to access and equality, opportunities for the youth, quality and relevance, and governance, management and financing – illustrates the specific challenges faced by the education sector in the fragile and post-war context, and its actual and potential role in either mitigating or exacerbating existing conditions of fragility. Finally, based on this prior analysis, *Section 5* suggests a set of policy, planning and programming recommendations to support education's role in stabilizing fragile contexts.

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1. For a full list of literature consulted for the purpose of this study, see the *Bibliography* section.
2. The counties visited were Cape Grand Mount, Nimba, Bong, River Cess, and Grand Bassa. This provided regional variation in terms of the degree of severity of conflict impact as well as service coverage by NGOs and other programmes. These counties represent several of the most impoverished and educationally deprived regions in the country. In particular, Grand Bassa, Bong, and Nimba are among the five counties with the lowest enrolment rates and the largest number of out-of-school children and youth. In Grand Bassa, for instance, only 14 per cent of primary children are enrolled in school.
3. In total, 67 individual and 13 focus group interviews of 30–60 minutes were conducted with key stakeholders, including government officials, representatives from international agencies, donors, and NGOs as well as community members, parents, teachers, civil society organizations, including student groups, advocacy groups, faith-based organizations, and universities (*Annex 1*). Some specific groups however, were underrepresented, such as school staff in the capital, and students more generally. Moreover, as interviews were conducted in Monrovia and the major town in each county, perceptions of people living in remote areas were not included.

2   **Historical background**

Liberia has experienced a long history of political, social, and economic fragility and insecurity, the legacies of which have inevitably shaped the country today. Culminating in the instability of the 1980s and the civil war, which began in 1989, overt conflict finally ended with the signing of the 2003 Accra Peace Accord, allowing the country to embark on intensive efforts of post-war reconstruction and development, as well as peacebuilding and reconciliation.

With the aim of providing a context in order to better understand the current situation, this section presents a general overview of Liberia's modern and contemporary history. It argues that Liberia's conflict and patterns of fragility are rooted in its origins as a modern state, as well as in the subsequent interactions of the state with its citizens, which led to Liberia's 'yet unresolved historical problem of political identity, and legitimacy' (GoL, 2009*a*: 71).

1822–1979

In the words of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report, the modern Liberian state, 'was an offshoot of slavery and the anti-slavery movement of the 19th century' (GoL, 2009*a*: 70). Liberia, 'land of the free', was founded in 1822 as a colony for former slaves by the American Colonization Society (ACS), a group of prominent Americans – both abolitionists and whites concerned with the expansion of a free African-American population in the United States – who had envisioned returning free African-Americans to Africa. Chosen as the landing point, Liberia soon became home to thousands of freeborn African-Americans and freed slaves who resettled there, despite the opposition of much of the indigenous population that had migrated in various waves to that area since 6000 B.C. This ethnically diverse country, consisting of 17 socio-cultural groups,[4] became an independent nation in 1847 under the leadership of the settler minority, known as Americo-Liberians, whose descendants today constitute approximately 5 per cent of the population (CIA, 2009). Their political domination, exercised through the True Whig Party (TWP), lasted until 1980 (GoL, 2009*a*).

The founding of the state was considered by the TRC to be at the root of later, and still persistent, political and socio-economic problems. As formulated in its Final Report:

> Central to understanding elitism, inequality, underdevelopment and armed conflict in Liberia from 1979 to 2003, is the decision to establish the Liberian state and the psychology of that establishment that maintained a divided nation from independence in 1847 till present. The early founders of the state had a choice to build a united Liberia of all its peoples involved in the building and development of the emergent nation or to form a separate 'civilised' state with the mission to civilize and Christianize the 'savage and barbaric' indigenous population as a precondition for citizenship and land ownership in the land of their birth and nativity. The American-borne early leadership chose the latter option of building a separatist state as a political direction and philosophy. This choice of the latter is at the root of Liberia's as yet unresolved historical problem of political identity and legitimacy (GoL, 2009*a*).

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4.   These include the Americo-Liberians (descendants of repatriated Africans), and 16 indigenous groups: the Gbandi, Bassa, Gio, Dei, Gola, Grebo, Kissi, Kpelle, Kru, Kuwaa (Belle), Loma, Ma (Mano), Mandingo, Mende, Vai, and Krahn.

A dualistic system was thus put in place with the Americo-Liberian settlers building separate and exclusive political, economic, and social institutions. Politically, the instruments of the state were used to promote the interests, and maintain the urban dominance, of Americo-Liberians. These monopolized political power through the establishment of a one-party state, firstly led by President Joseph Jenkins Roberts, which restricted the voting rights of the indigenous population whose citizenship was not recognized until 1904 (GoL, 2009*a*). Economically, the elite captured most of the wealth, distributing it through patronage networks. Conversely, the majority of Liberians benefited little from national resources, mainly relying on subsistence farming and low wage or forced work on foreign concessions. Through a dual system of law – whereby the *kwii* (the civilized) were ruled by settler law and 'aborigines' were ruled by custom – restrictions were in fact imposed on the latter group, for instance on trade with foreigners, as well as ownership of land. Furthermore, most of the infrastructure and basic services were concentrated in Monrovia and a few other cities, which further failed to serve the indigenous rural population (GoL, 2008*a*). As a result, the concentration of power fuelled corruption, minimized participation in decision-making by the population at large, and hampered national development (GoL, 2008*a*). It also led to tensions between Americo-Liberians and the indigenous peoples, resulting in 15 deadly conflicts between 1822 and 1915.

After the Second World War, the political situation in Liberia began opening up. President William Tubman, in office from 1944 to 1971, sought to address exclusion and integrate indigenous peoples into Liberia's dominant political, economic, and social life. Results, however, were mixed. On the one hand, Tubman's policies of 'unification,' 'open door,' and 'integration,' aimed at eliminating formal and informal status differences between the two groups, allowed for greater participation on the part of indigenous peoples. On the other hand, the effectiveness of these policies was limited by constitutional constraints; an example of which can be seen in the dual legal system whereby the rights of indigenous people fell short of the many rights of Americo-Liberians (GoL, 2009*d*). Inevitably, in this context of continued exclusion and marginalization, the gradual 'opening up' questions began to surface about the legitimacy of the system (Outram, 1999). In particular, political legitimacy was further compromised by Tubman's attempts to consolidate and retain his own power and that of the TWP through a combination of patronage, appeasement, and repression, which eventually came to characterize the political culture of the country. Moreover, while the 1960s saw economic growth with increasing exports of primary products and foreign investments, the general population saw little benefit from this growing economy, resulting in a situation that was described as 'growth without development' (Clower *et al.,* 1966).

In 1971, Tubman was succeeded by his vice president William Tolbert. In response to growing dissatisfaction with the authoritarianism of the past, Tolbert attempted to substantially open up government to democratization and reform. As part of his reform attempts, he promised a 'policy government' to replace the old system of patronage, and he permitted free speech, expanded infrastructure, promoted agriculture, encouraged young indigenous professionals, and sought to decentralize central government (GoL, 2009*a*). The outcomes, again, were mixed. While Tolbert's reform initiatives succeeded in exposing and raising awareness of the problems and inequities that characterized the system, they were unable to respond to the raised expectations for an inclusive polity. Moreover, despite this pro-reform stance, Tolbert's family and associates personally profited during his administration, further weakening the legitimacy of the government. The poor, marginalized and disempowered, as well as many of

the elite who were uncomfortable with the perceived challenges to their privileges represented by the reforms, became aggrieved. Political opposition soon began making public its claims, and the government chose to deal severely with the situation, unable to mediate between the conflicting claims by the elite, who sought to maintain their privileges, and the popular opposition, who sought redress. Compounded by an economic crisis, political and social tension rose as economic conditions worsened, unemployment grew, and the cost of living, especially food, increased dramatically. When, in 1979, the government considered raising the price of rice, protests and riots ensued. The government responded violently, eventually calling in troops from neighbouring Guinea.

1980–2003

On 12 April 1980, Master Sergeant Samuel Doe, a member of Liberia's indigenous Krahn tribe, together with his troops assassinated Tolbert, overthrew the government, and assumed military control under the name of the People's Redemption Council (PRC). This military coup was a major watershed in Liberia's history as it marked the end of 133 years of Americo-Liberian oligarchy. While there was some initial hope with the toppling of the old order, soon Doe – like those before him – created a government system that benefited his own ethnic group, a small minority comprising 4 per cent of the population (Paris, 2004), and was engaged in widespread human rights violations. As a result, ethnic tensions grew. The opposition was repressed, particularly after a failed coup in 1985 while, in the same year, a fraudulent election constitutionally designated Doe as the first president of Liberia's Second Republic.

In 1989, the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), one of several opposition groups, invaded Liberia from neighbouring Côte d'Ivoire, kick-starting a bloody civil war. Its leader, Charles Taylor, was a former procurement official in the Doe administration who had fled the country after being accused of misappropriating government funds. Initially welcomed by many Liberians frustrated by Doe's rule, Taylor's army reached the capital within six months. In 1990, faced with alarming reports of widespread human rights abuses and an imminent humanitarian crisis, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and later the United Nations (UN) dispatched international forces and attempted to broker peace among the various armed factions. Despite numerous attempted peace agreements, the conflict raged until the signing of the Abuja Accord of 1996. Subsequently, a schedule for disarmament and demobilization was established, an international monitoring team was deployed, and a transitional government was put in place. In 1997, Taylor's party, the National Patriotic Party (NPP), won by a substantial majority in elections regarded by outside observers as free and fair. However, for the next six years, Liberians saw no improvement to their lives, with unemployment and illiteracy rates remaining extremely high. By 2003, internal and international opposition had grown and an armed rebellion resumed bitter fighting against Taylor while, at the same time, steps were taken to prosecute Liberia's president for atrocities committed during the civil war in neighbouring Sierra Leone. Charged by the Special Court for Sierra Leone with war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, Taylor resigned office in 2003 and fled to Nigeria until he was extradited for prosecution in 2006, first to Sierra Leone and later to the Netherlands, where he is currently held in custody. Soon after Taylor's flight, the 14-year-long civil war was finally brought to an end with the signing of the Accra Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), brokered by ECOWAS between the warring factions and the interim government. Following the establishment of a two-year National Transitional

Government of Liberia (NTGL), led by Gyude Bryant, national elections were held in 2005. These were won by Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who became the first female head of state in Africa. In the same year, legislation was passed to establish a TRC charged with investigating and reporting gross human rights violations that occurred in Liberia between 1979 and 2003 (TRC Act, 2005).[5] Its final report, which presented findings and recommendations to prevent future abuses, was released in late 2009.

In the aftermath of the civil war, Liberia and the new government faced major challenges in dealing with the legacy of the conflict. About 270,000 people were estimated to have been killed, and hundreds of thousands had been displaced, internally or as refugees. As in most wars, women and children suffered disproportionately (GoL, 2008*a*); many women suffered gender-based violence, and an estimated 1 in 10 children were recruited as soldiers, while a similar proportion were left traumatized after witnessing the murder or rape of family members and acquaintances (USAID, 2004). As a result of the violence, communities were uprooted and traditional social relations were disrupted. Furthermore, government authority and the economy collapsed, and much of the nation's physical infrastructure, basic institutions of governance, and social services were destroyed (GoL, 2008*a*).

With the firm intention to address these challenges, the government undertook a broad and ambitious agenda to foster peace and to rebuild the country. For the purpose of post-war peacebuilding and reconstruction, an initial 150-day Action Plan was put in place, followed by an interim Poverty Reduction Strategy (iPRS), which served as a bridge to the more complete Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) 2008–2012. In the PRS, priority was given to four broad areas of activity: (1) enhancing national security, (2) revitalizing the economy, 3) strengthening governance and the rule of law, and 4) rehabilitating infrastructure and delivering basic services, including education (GoL, 2008*a*). As will be illustrated in the next section, while some progress has been achieved in reaching these goals, challenges still remain.

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5. Part of the TRC's complex mandate was also to critically examine the country's history with the aim to explore the origins and causes of the war as well as to dispel historical falsehoods and misconceptions related to the country's socio-economic and political development, and to provide a forum for victims and perpetrators, which would facilitate truth-seeking, healing, and reconciliation, with a special focus on women, children, and vulnerable groups. Interestingly, field interviews revealed the existence of mixed feelings about the contribution of the TRC towards peace and reconciliation. In relation to reconciliation, one interviewee stated that: 'TRC was also helpful. It helped people to apologize ... People reconciled and gradually we forgot about the past. The recommendations of TRC made some good points but others were left behind ... Some groups justified their actions and didn't apologize ...' (interview #16). In relation to peace and security, almost 30 per cent of respondents pointed at the overall importance, as well as the threat to stability posed by the TRC. This threat was related in particular to a number of controversial recommendations whose implementation was felt to be dangerous. These included a provision according to which those who had been found to have supported or profited from the war, including several prominent legislators and other leaders who were named by the report, should be barred from holding public office for 30 years.

3   **Current fragility analysis**

3.1   Security

As illustrated in the previous section, Liberia has a long history of conflict and human rights abuses, culminating in a 14-year-long war that caused immense suffering to the country's population.

Over the past six years, overall physical security in Liberia has stabilized, despite the persistence of numerous small outbreaks of violence and widespread crime (GoL, 2008*a*).[6] Since the CPA, security has been maintained by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), a peacekeeping force that still maintains 15,000 troops and is scheduled to remain in the country until after the 2012 elections, while steps have been taken by the government to move towards taking over this task. For this purpose, and in recognition of the fact that, 'Since independence and for 14 years of war, Liberia's army, police and other security agencies have mostly been sources of insecurity and misery for a destitute people' (ICG, 2009), the government, in collaboration with development partners, has undertaken an ambitious series of security and justice sector reforms aimed at professionalization and de-politicization. Activities have included the complete disbanding of the army and the re-recruitment and rigorous vetting of 2,000 new recruits, the disarmament, demobilization and, to a lesser extent, the reintegration of former combatants into society as well as police training (ICG, 2009). From the field interviews, it emerged that such reforms are highly valued. For instance, referring to the police, a few respondents stated that, while in the past a lack of trained personnel exacerbated violence, they had started seeing improvements to their safety and hoped that progress would continue through the recruitment, selection and training of police, and through the prioritization of civic protection.[7] Major challenges, however, appear to remain, especially with regard to police and judicial reforms. Reportedly, the police is still largely considered ineffective and corrupt (ICG, 2009). Similarly, judicial reform is felt to have stalled, with citizens still not being able to count on the courts for fair enforcement of the rule of law and the protection of individual rights.

However, thanks to both international intervention and the government's reform efforts, the security situation appears to be improving, while the current situation of 'peace' today is still considered to be fragile. In particular, field interviews revealed a sense of hope about the improved physical security, coupled with anxiety and fear about the possibility of returning to war. Respondents reported that the country was exhausted with conflict, yet two thirds of them were readily able to identify factors that could lead the country back to instability or armed conflict.[8] According to one leading security expert, Liberia is currently experiencing a negative peace, or the absence of war and 'direct' violence (Galtung and Jacobsen, 2000); conversely, a

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6. The PRS describes growth in crime as, 'Liberia's most significant current security threat' (GoL. 2008*a*: 84).
7. According to a respondent, 'Before, the rebel generals or security were here and it was difficult. They would abuse us and also demand our money. Now the police are fine. No real problems with them compared with before ... We want the military and police to be carefully trained and selected. They cannot recruit people who were involved in the fighting! They must be very careful about this' (interview #24).
8. A few respondents noted situations in which they, or those they know personally, would pick up arms again, while a couple of interviewees spoke of the legitimacy of armed conflict in some situations. Some respondents also saw UNMIL as essential to maintaining peace.

positive peace, which would involve the elimination of indirect or structural violence, is still to be consolidated, as will appear in the next paragraphs.

3.2 Economy

With the end of the war, economic insecurity appears to have replaced physical insecurity as a primary concern for many Liberians, and has become one of the main ongoing sources of fragility today.

Liberia's current economic insecurity is largely a legacy of two decades of instability. During the war period, many foreign concessions were closed, much of the country's infrastructure was destroyed (Monrovia was without running water and electricity until 2006), looting and war profiteering were rampant, and much of the country's skilled manpower had been killed or had fled. Consequently, over the 20 years of instability, per capita GDP declined by 80–90 per cent in real terms (GoL, 2009d). Although Liberia is rebuilding from the devastation wrought by the war and its economy is growing,[9] it remains today one of the poorest and most highly indebted countries in the world.[10] Besides the need to deal with the huge impact of the war, part of the problem lies in the structure of Liberia's economy, which has traditionally comprised a large and relatively undeveloped informal economy and subsistence agricultural sector with low levels of productivity, and a comparatively small formal economy that is highly dependent on exports of primary products and therefore vulnerable to fluctuations in international commodity prices and global shocks. This relatively undeveloped national economy, coupled with the reliance on a comparatively small tax base as well as poor tax collection, has provided little funding for the government's national treasury. Conversely, this has led to a high level of dependence on foreign aid for both financial and technical assistance, with more than half the resources available to the Liberian government estimated to come from international development assistance (European Commission, 2009).

As the field interviews revealed, economic issues – including pervasive poverty, unemployment, and high levels of inequality – appear to be among the most pressing issues faced by the population. Among the population, poverty and food insecurity are rampant: 80 per cent of Liberians are reported to be living on less than US$1 per day (GoL, 2006a), and 40 per cent are highly or moderately vulnerable to food insecurity[11] (GoL, 2008a). Unemployment – identified by the International Crisis Group as the most serious threat to stability in Liberia (ICG, 2009) – remains extremely high, and most employment opportunities are in sectors characterized by low productivity and low wages, mainly in the informal sector. In this context, with a lack of public safety nets, and the disruption of many traditional social safety net mechanisms caused by the war, the most vulnerable remain largely unprotected. Moreover, historical legacies of fragility, by which only a few privileged saw direct benefits from economic growth, continue today. Coupled with an awareness of persistent inequality in terms of access to national and

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9. The Liberian economy grew by more than 9 per cent in 2007 (GoL, 2008a) and is expected to grow by more than 10 per cent in 2009 (EC, 2009).
10. In 2007, Liberia's public and publicly guaranteed external debt amounted to US$4.7 billion, mostly inherited from the 1980s and 1990s in a context where government revenues 2007/2009 were estimated at US$200 million. Steps are now being taken to deal with the debt through the Heavily Indebted Debt Program of the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and IFC (International Finance Corporation) (EC, 2009).
11. Mainly as a result of the fact that substantial amounts of food are imported, and food prices are high relative to income, a 2007 nutrition policy analysis found that nearly 40 per cent of Liberian children were stunted from poor nutrition, one third of under-fives were severely underweight, and an estimated one in five deaths of children aged under 5 years were attributable to malnutrition (MoHSW/AED/World Food Program, 2007).

public resources and in income distribution, economic insecurity remains a major source of frustration and grievance, and among the most likely triggers of future conflict.

Among all sources of fragility in relation to the economy, access to land has been a particular and long-standing source of grievance in Liberia, with national law having prevented indigenous people from legally owning land for much of the country's history. Issues of land have been considered as having both contributed to the war and as currently posing a threat to stability. In relation to the past, lack of access to land by the youth for instance, has been considered as one of the two main sources of the 'long-term agrarian crisis' identified as an underlying cause of the war (Richards *et al.,* 2005). Regarding the present, a recent TRC survey found that land and boundary disputes are felt to be the biggest threat to peace in Liberia (Amnesty International, 2009*a*). This finding was corroborated during the field interviews in which issues of land were described by 35 per cent of respondents as a source of potential conflict, which could lead again to violence and instability. As pointed out by several interviewees, the war had complicated issues of land ownership, as many of those who returned from forced displacement found their properties occupied by others, while records had been destroyed.[12] In this context, the government established a Land Commission in 2009 – finally launched in March 2010 – to lead reforms in land policy and laws, and to develop strategies for resolving land disputes and to adjudicate competing claims on land in a fair and transparent manner.

3.3 Environment

As noted above, Liberia's economy is closely linked with the environment. The exploitation of natural resources, including land, is at the base of the country's economy. Today, the country faces a major challenge in fostering economic growth based on natural resources while simultaneously safeguarding the interests, livelihoods, and safety of poor communities, as well as substantially reforming natural resource governance.

As already mentioned, lack of and unequal access to natural resources, as well as unequal distribution of benefits from such resources, have been major historical drivers of fragility in Liberia. Although rich in natural resources, Liberia has in fact been characterized as suffering from what has generally been referred to as the 'resource curse'. Historically, proceeds from extractive industries were channelled to a small elite, fuelling resentment among the excluded majority. In addition, foreign concessions were offered disproportionately favourable terms to the detriment of local communities. With resource-based production being likely to remain the primary engine of economic growth in Liberia over the coming years, the PRS has envisioned the exploitation of natural resources as the major driver of poverty alleviation. Accordingly, the PRS seeks to 'ensure that a significant percentage of the revenue generated from timber and mining concessions and rubber plantations reaches and benefits the poor and assists in poverty reduction.' (GoL, 2008*a*: 178)

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12. 'Liberian ownership versus ethnic group ownership [is a driver of fragility]. Ethnic differences are a much bigger problem than in Sierra Leone. The fighting factions were on ethnic lines and there are still tensions, antagonisms. Mandingoes – mainly Muslim. All other groups align against the Mandingoes because they're Christian vs. Muslim' (interview #60). '[They] are a minority in ... but they are the richest and own lots of land. They acquired land from other groups through the purchase of it. Many of the Mandingo landowners fled during the war – when they came back their land had been taken' (interview #65). According to one respondent, 'What might bring a conflict is land business. Many people were displaced. Some came and occupied the land and they don't want to give it back. There is a team sent by the President to deal with this and look into land disputes. It is working here but they need to pay attention to it and *keep* paying attention' (interview #5).

Once benefits from national resources are distributed more equally, the PRS would seek to deal with the legacy of poor governance of natural resources. In particular, it would aim to stop a number of 'unsustainable and environmentally unsound practices' such as deforestation, unsustainable patterns of production, consumption, and waste disposal, illegal mining and logging, and wildlife poaching, all of which were exacerbated by the conflict.[13] Detailed policies are in the process of being developed, along with mechanisms and personnel to implement and enforce the policies.

3.4 Governance

Poor governance and the questioned legitimacy of state institutions have been a long-standing issue in Liberia. Historically, political power has been wielded in an exclusionary manner, while public institutions have principally served the interests of the group in power rather than the common interest of the nation. Furthermore, few mechanisms have been in place for groups not in power to promote their interests, or for conflicts to be resolved non-violently. Repression and co-optation of the opposition have instead been common practices among the elites to manage demands for power and claims on resources. The result has been the lack of precedent in the last 30 years of a peaceful and orderly transfer of power. In addition to undermining the legitimacy of and public trust in government offices and office holders has been the concentration of power among a small group of people in central government institutions in Monrovia, especially in the chief executive. This concentration of power has worked against broad participation in and responsibility for decision-making, and has limited the space for public dialogue. It has likely meant fewer checks on excesses, and the development of a system and culture of patronage and corruption, which has skewed decision-making and the allocation of resources, as opposed to meritocratic networks guided by systematic procedures. Patronage and corruption also reinforced a sense of 'us' versus 'them', increasing the politicization of service provision and governance.

Today, the new government has taken a new tone, showing general high levels of political will to break with the past and to act in the interest of all in the framework of a new social contract between Liberia's government and its citizens. As stated in the PRS:

> Improving governance necessarily entails transforming the relationship between the state and its citizens, focusing especially on those who are underrepresented or disadvantaged. Women, children and persons with disabilities suffer disproportionately from violence and abuse, and have been unable to participate fully in Liberia's new democratic environment. Youth have been deprived of education, health care, and the benefits of a stable environment during their formative years. The government will make special efforts to ensure that its institutions, policies and processes afford these groups consideration and equal representation. It is aiming to build a culture of inclusive and participatory governance (GoL, 2008*a*: 84).

The President, who seems to enjoy widespread popular support, has sought in a variety of ways to build a government that is 'open, collaborative, and peaceful' (GoL, 2008*a*: 7). Attempts, for instance, were made to create a government reflecting ethnic diversity within the country by appointments to the cabinet and high level positions within the ministries. Also manifest of

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13. For example, the destruction of the electrical grid led to an environmentally destructive proliferation of electric generators. Also, the collapse of infrastructure increased reliance on charcoal and fuel wood to meet household energy needs, worsening deforestation. Lack of oversight over natural resources has allowed illegal mining and logging, substantial portions of which are carried out by ex-combatants.

this government strategy of inclusiveness is the consultative process that was put in place by the PRS, which appears to have set a standard for consultation, communication, and ownership of national priorities by stakeholders throughout the system. A number of reforms of governance and finance were also initiated and are now at various stages of implementation, including military, police, and judiciary reform, the development of a civil service reform strategy, the drafting of a 'National Policy on Decentralization and Local Governance', participation in the Governance and Economic Management Assistance Program, promotion of public financial management reforms, and the establishment of an anti-corruption commission (EC, 2009).

Despite such promising initiatives, major governance challenges remain, affecting the level of public trust in the willingness and capacity of the government to deliver on its promises. In particular, public institutions continue to be weak due to persistent high centralization and concentration of power, high levels of corruption, and the lack of human and organizational capacity to address existing problems. The current highly centralized system of governance is clearly exemplified by the strong executive role conferred to the president by the constitution. Despite certain checks and balances modelled on the American political system, power continues to be institutionally and traditionally vested in the 'big man' of the president, thereby placing a great deal of responsibility on one individual, and on his/her good will, ethics, and skills. As far as corruption is concerned, although reforms are being implemented to establish structural checks and a culture of accountability, informal patronage systems and patterns of corruption continue in the absence of effective systems and established organizational processes. As already pointed out with regard to the judiciary and police systems[14], during field research, corruption – seen as still being 'very high and at all levels' (interview #8) despite improvements – was mentioned by many interviewees as a current factor of fragility, and a threat both to stability and peace, and to economic recovery.[15] The limited capacity of emergent institutions to deliver is another major factor contributing to the current weakness of Liberia's institutions of governance. This results from several factors: shortages of educated manpower (partly due to death and displacement during the war), a lack of training in particular areas of expertise and organizational systems to support workers, as well as a lack of resources. Among other things, lack of capacity seems to be one primary reason for the failure of effective decentralization and delegation, hence perpetuating the concentration of power.[16] Lack of capacity, in fact, can lead to a vicious cycle of fragility, with leaders at the central level not decentralizing due to a lack of capacity at decentralized levels of the system; and staff at decentralized levels consequently not gaining experience in operational decision-making and implementation, and thus not developing their capacities. Despite the importance given in most major policy documents to the development of 'capacity', only recently has a comprehensive strategy been developed to do so.

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14. Bribes demanded by traffic police were sometimes mentioned as an obvious indicator of a corrupt public system. According to a respondent, 'The system is not functioning. Again it feeds into mob justice. Police are untrained and uneducated. They can't fill out forms. There is traffic police and it all starts there with them taking bribes' (interview #19).

15. One respondent stressed that 'the corruption hasn't gone away. [The mindset remains] take what I can get and corruption is the net result' (interview #78). Another interviewee stated that, 'Corruption continues. The government is trying to grow the economy, which is difficult with corruption' (interview #46).

16. Some respondents, however, praised the decentralization that has taken place: 'The government strategy is decentralizing. There are county development funds ... and funds are managed at the county levels. There is the possibility for misuse of funds but also potential for community participation and addressing community needs' (interview #65); 'Before, all development budget was in Monrovia. Now some is connected with the counties. Before it was not so! Now our money is ours!' (interview #29).

3.5 Social issues

In Liberia, social exclusion is widely seen as a primary cause of fragility and the root of historical grievances. From the outset, this was built into the state's foundation and was maintained by subsequent regimes through various institutions. Although current fragility is less a function of present-day exclusionary practices, the legacies of past exclusion continue to play out, despite efforts by the current government to address them.

One important consequence of the history of exclusion and marginalization is the weak sense of collective identity on the part of many Liberians. For most of its history, the Liberian nation has been identified with the institutions and culture of the Americo-Liberians, while few mechanisms have been in place for developing a national identity inclusive of all groups living within the borders.[17] A separate identity was also facilitated by a lack of infrastructure and economic development in much of the country outside Monrovia, which led to certain regions functioning independently from the state. As stated in the TRC report, separate and unequal development of settler and indigenous groups set the stage for a series of 'dualisms' that persist to the present day and work against unity, 'Thus we labour, even today, amid dualisms – statutory and customary law; Poro/Sande and modern education; outward-looking security norms ignoring regional and continental realities; land as communal property versus land in fee simple, etc' (GoL, 2008*a*: 80). Mainly as a result of a historical urban concentration of political, economic, and social institutions, as well as service provision and opportunities, much of Liberia still remains divided between a modern world that is urban, schooled, advantaged, and employed in the formal economy, and a traditional one that is rural, unschooled, disadvantaged, and engaged – if at all – in the informal or agricultural economy. The crisis that began in the 1980s, with one group seeking to violently redress historical exclusion, did nothing but sharpen identities along ethnic lines and further deepen the lack of a sense of shared identity and destiny, and which occurred as a result of the political mobilization of identity and differences by the leadership of warring factions.

In Liberia, besides a general lack of strong collective national identity across ethnic lines, a sense of identity crisis and social alienation has been experienced by one particular social group: the youth. This group deserves particular attention as it both comprises the majority of the population and the bulk of combatants during the civil war.[18] Anthropological studies, which have looked closely at youth in Liberia, see the civil war as 'partially an outcome of the structural marginalization of youth' (Utas, 2005: 150) and the failure of rural institutions, particularly land and marriage, as well as alternatives, to serve their needs. As argued by Richards, *et al.*, 'At the core of Liberia's conflict lies a class of marginal young people who ... consider that family, marriage, education, markets and the administration of justice have all failed them. Many have preferred to take their chances with various militia groups.' As he further explains:

> The militias engaged in the Liberian conflict are 'fed' by a large number of young people in the interior who are no longer able, or willing, to integrate within a traditional social system based on family land and social deference. Demobilizing the militias requires the provision of alternatives to returning to rural dependency. This implies major changes in institutional frameworks for rural social solidarity, as well as changes in the employment opportunity

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17. Beyond the Americo-Liberian-indigenous differences, ethnic identity was relatively 'fluid' until the 1980s, with individuals often assuming multiple identities.
18. In Liberia, most combatants were youth, including women and children in various support roles: porters, cooks, wives, as well as fighters.

structure. The two most important rural institutional frameworks for healing a generational breach that is a fundamental cause of the conflict are marriage and land (2005: vi–vii).

In the aftermath of the war, the criminalization of the youth, due to their large militant role as combatants during the war, as well as the lack of satisfactory educational and employment opportunities to facilitate their social (re-)integration, appear to have further exacerbated this group's feelings of alienation and restiveness, likely contributing to fragility. As pointed out by Sommers (2006), and revealed by the field interviews, the perception of the threat posed by the youth to stability appears evident from the repeated mention of the youth as a *problem* to be solved rather than as a *resource* to be used in helping rebuild the country. While it is an important step to acknowledge that, 'when young people – particularly young men – are uprooted, jobless, alienated, and have few opportunities for positive engagement, they can quickly become a ready pool of recruits for groups or individuals seeking to mobilize violence,' it is also paramount to distinguish between 'conflict-prone youth' – 'young people likely to perpetuate violence'– and 'transformational youth,' who are 'those youth with the motivation and skills to mobilize positive change in their communities' (Brady and Timberman, 2006: 34). Clearly, in Liberia, this latter group, and its potential to transform society in positive and constructive ways, has been neglected.

Women make up yet another marginalized group. Historically, a substantial gender bias has disadvantaged girls and women in Liberia.[19] On average, they have been facing greater restrictions than men on formal participation in public life, have received less education, and have therefore been less likely to serve in positions of leadership. They have also suffered greatly from gender-based violence during the war, as documented by the TRC (GoL, 2009*a*), and continue to do so today. In order to tackle such issues, gender has recently started being addressed by programming, in particular, by the Ministry of Gender and Development and the Gender Unit in the Ministry of Education (MOE). Unfortunately, while gender policies are being formulated, implementation has yet to begin, mainly due to a lack of funding. While some have criticized the inadequate attention that has so far been devoted to girls and women, during the field interviews it emerged that the way gender has been addressed, largely focusing on women, has caused some resentment among men who feel excluded. In the words of one interviewee, 'women are less fragile than men right now – there is such a push for women to make it but there is grumbling by men – the men are the potential trouble makers' (interview #66).

To a large extent, women were discussed by interviewees as a traditionally positive force for reducing conflict and building resilience. Women themselves talked of ways they had promoted dialogue, resisted violence, and had mobilized to provide needed services in their communities. Not only women, but also local communities in general were mentioned as being contributors to peace and resilience. Community development projects, in particular, were described as powerful and effective initiatives, often making up for the government's inability to provide for the needs of the population. This was the case both during and after the war. For instance, while the education system was directly affected by the fighting, local communities were often able to keep schools operating by relying on their own resources in the absence of the central government. Similarly, today, educational services are provided by the community when the government has not been able to do so. In the words of one respondent, 'Communities are resilient. They do more than their fair share. There are places where the only school has been

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19. Until 2003, Liberian law distinguished between the rights of 'civilized' and 'traditional' women in marriage, inheritance, and property.

built by the community' (interview #61). In addition, community-level mechanisms for conflict resolution, mainly based on dialogue, as well as community-based indigenous democratic processes and mechanisms, largely ignored in the establishment of modern systems of governance, were mentioned as important sources of resilience and as key strategies in building understanding and consensus within the community (Moran, 2006).

4   Education and fragility

In the past as well as in the present, Liberia's context of fragility has inevitably affected the country's education system to the point that fragility has come to characterize the system itself.

Throughout Liberia's contemporary history, the education system has been characterized by features of fragility and structural weaknesses, including the need for, 'efficient administration,' 'dedicated and well-paid teachers,' 'proper supplies,' 'maintenance,' 'development of an educational revival,' and 'reform of the tax structure' (Lanier, 1961: 256), as well as a stronger articulation between the training provided by the school system and the needs of the economy (USAID, 1988). The civil war greatly compounded these problems. In 2003, infrastructure, equipment, the management system, and the teaching force were all in disarray, leading to the near destruction and disruption of the education system. Thirty per cent of public schools and 24 per cent of community schools were completely destroyed, and 16 per cent more were seriously damaged with desks, chairs, and basic supplies looted or destroyed, with all educational management and support systems disrupted when many of the teachers fled, creating a legacy of shortage of qualified and trained teachers. As a result of the war, school participation fell dramatically, with as much as an entire generation of children having missed the opportunity to go to school, while many school children were abducted into fighting forces. As stated in the government's PRS, 'The majority of Liberia's young people have spent more time engaged in war than in school' (GoL, 2008*a*: 185). The effects remain today: over one third of the population has never attended school, creating a legacy of uneducated, substantially disaffected young people.

In the aftermath of the violence, a number of policy initiatives have been taken by the Liberian government within the framework of post-war reconstruction and reform with the aim to rebuild the system while addressing the fragility that has characterized it. A first effort in this regard was made in 2000 with the development of an Education Master Plan 2000–2010, which set out the government's education policies and strategies. Of limited practical value due to the government's state of disarray and the unavailability of basic data at that time, the Master Plan had the merit of having called for an EFA Action Plan 2004–2015. Later, based on the iPRS, the MOE developed the so-called Liberian Primary Education Recovery Program (LPERP) for Fast Track Initiative (FTI) approval. Designed to cover a three-year period (2007–2010) and with an estimated budget of US$70.6 million, the LPERP was intended to move the primary education sector from short-term emergency to recovery status, and therefore to a more systematic programme strategy, which would also start focusing on long-term development of other education sub-sectors. The eight LPERP components consisted of: (1) infrastructure expansion and improvement; (2) instructional material and curriculum development; (3) teacher development; (4) accelerated learning programmes for older students; (5) advisory supervision and assessment services; (6) education sector governance; (7) organizational capacity; and (8) institutional and implementation arrangements (GoL, 2007*c*). However, due to the lack of a comprehensive sector plan and concerns about accountability systems, FTI funding was not approved at the time. UNICEF and the Soros Foundation, however, intervened by committing

US$17 million to the Liberian government through a private-public multi-donor trust fund named the Liberia Education Pooled Fund (LEPF). Through the LEPF, funds were allocated to an off-shore account with UNICEF as custodian, but are available to the ministries of education and finance that bear direct responsibility for the planning and implementation of LPERP activities. At the same time, a system of checks minimizes the potential for mismanagement (Kalmthout, 2009), including partial oversight by an Education Sector Development Committee.

Following the iPRS, the PRS, which focuses on security, economy, governance, and service delivery, explicitly included education among its priority areas. The PRS, with which education sector planning is currently aligned, identified several 'key challenges' facing the sector, including:

- inadequate and undefined sources of finance that will enable the sector to keep pace with the ever increasing demand for quality and relevant education;
- weak capacity for management and governance from central to the local level;
- an outdated curriculum and inadequate textbooks, chairs, desks, and school supplies;
- insufficient school access that limits the ability of every child, including girls and persons with disabilities, to exercise his/her right to quality education;
- insufficient numbers of well-trained, qualified, and motivated teachers;
- an understaffed and overcrowded public university; and
- poor quality programmes being offered at some institutions of higher learning (GoL, 2008*a*: 111).

In response to such challenges, the government articulated an ambitious set of goals and objectives for the 2008–2012 period of the PRS:

> During the PRS period, the government's overall goal for education is to improve access to and the quality of relevant education at all levels, emphasizing the availability of Universal Primary Education and recognizing the needs of the disadvantaged, especially girls. To achieve this goal, it will aim to achieve seven strategic objectives:
>
> - Strengthen the curriculum.
> - Improve access to quality, safe, and hygienic schools [...]
> - Recruit and train qualified teachers [...]
> - Improve learning achievement and school completion rates [...]
> - Strengthen the quality and accessibility of skills and vocational training [...]
> - Improve the quality of tertiary education [...]
> - Strengthen the overall governance, management, and financial basis of the education system (GoL 2008*a*: 112–113).

Again, more recently the ministry has drafted a sector-wide five-year Education Policy and Education Sector Plan (ESP) for the 2008–2012 period, which has entailed a two-year process of consultation and development, and which was subjected to a series of extensive reviews as of November 2009. The ESP is the most comprehensive planning activity the MOE has undertaken to date. It sets priorities for the entire sector and provides a medium-term financing plan based on a series of studies and analyses of the Liberian situation.[20] While the ESP incorporates all levels of education in Liberia – early childhood and pre-primary education, primary, junior and senior

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20. Studies underlying the plan include the Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) survey (GoL, 2007*b*), the 2007 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) (LISGIS, 2007*a*), the 2007/2008 National School Census (NSC) (GoL, 2008*b*), as well as a December 2006 UNESCO-funded survey of TVET institutions in Liberia (GoL, 2008*c*).

high school, tertiary, teacher training, technical/vocational and adult learning – its emphasis, consistent with that of the PRS, is on the primary level and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Since the signing of the CPA, considerable progress has been made in the education sector. However, the achievement of the government's objectives, as they are spelled out in the above-mentioned documents, remains greatly challenged by the scale of the efforts that need to take place in Liberia's overall context of fragility. As it will be argued in this section on the relationship between education and fragility, the continuing state of fragility of the education system, which today hinders its ability to effectively reach all the children and youth under its mandate, has the potential – largely realized – to perpetuate patterns and dynamics of fragility both at the sectoral and the macro level. Conversely, by addressing the fragility of the sector, efforts in rebuilding and reforming education have the potential to mitigate and counter political, economic and social aspects of fragility, which is so far inadequately explored and exploited.

In exploring the state of Liberia's education system in relation to fragility, the following paragraphs will focus on discussing issues that are considered to be of particular relevance to the Liberia case, namely: access and equality, educational opportunities for the youth, quality and relevance, and governance, management and financing.

4.1 Access and equality

As acknowledged in the PRS, political, economic and social exclusion, and marginalization were at the core of grievances that led to overt conflict in Liberia. In its words, 'The major root causes of the conflict are attributable to poverty, greed, corruption, limited access to education; economic, social, civil, and political inequalities; identity conflict, land tenure, and distribution, etc.' (GoL, 2009*c*: 4). Lack of equal access to education was thus clearly recognized by the government as having been a contributing factor to the conflict that brought the country to its knees. Similarly, several interviewees spoke of the connections they saw between education and conflict, as well as of the importance of education for their children, for the nation, and for the sake of peace. According to two mothers,

> If all the children could go to school, it would be peace. If we had literacy before, it would not have happened, the war. Everyone joined the war. The children joined. If they had been literate themselves, there still would have been war, but it wouldn't have been like it was. With all the children joining with guns. But it wouldn't have been like that (interview #11).

In the past, while schooling served an educational function for many, it also played a major role in the reproduction and reinforcement of larger historic patterns of exclusion and marginalization through unequal provision, in a context where education functions as a gatekeeper to qualifications for participation in the economic and political institutions of power and leadership, and through its failure to prepare the majority of the population for the economic, social, and cultural realities they were most likely to face. Since the founding of Liberia in particular, provision of formal education reflected and helped reinforce the dominance and mores of the Americo-Liberian minority (Lanier, 1961; Moran, 2006). While the settlers established schools for their children – which over time became accessible to a few indigenous people acculturated into Americo-Liberian society and culture – indigenous young boys and girls were initiated into adult roles by traditional (and still existent) *poro* and *sande* 'schools' respectively, which were

never integrated into formal schooling (Lanier, 1961; Moran, 2006).[21] Subsequent governments expanded general access to education, with school enrolments growing from 19,826 in 1948 to 279,100 in 1980 (USAID, 1988). However, as one interviewee explained:

> The indigenous people were deprived of high level positions. In the entire history of Liberia to 1980, only one indigenous person was a minister of foreign affairs. None were ministers of internal affairs, none were speaker of the house, and none were head of the senate. So all these factors [contributed to the war]. Before the fighting, the education standard was very low. The University of Liberia [for example] never had graduate studies. Because the descendants of the elite went to America. They were only here for high school. They went abroad on government scholarships. So the system reproduced itself (interview #54).

If limited access to education contributed to maintaining and reinforcing patterns of exclusion and marginalization, conversely, by expanding provision, education offers the possibility of helping mitigate sources of fragility as it would have the potential to foster broader participation in political and economic institutions, as well as to advance the well-being of the majority in light of the existent economic and cultural situation.

In recognition of the close relationship between the conflict and educational access in Liberia, the national government placed high priority in the LPERP, iPRS, PRS, and ESP on providing access for all children, with a focus on disadvantaged groups. The ESP, for instance, discussed disparities in the provision of educational services by geographic location and income group, and drew on household poverty and demographic surveys to inform the development of policies with an eye toward inclusiveness.

In line with its commitment to promoting access to education, the government has undertaken a number of promising actions. First of all, it made 'infrastructure expansion and development,' including construction and rehabilitation of educational facilities, among the first steps to demonstrate its seriousness and sense of obligation to the people.[22] Among other things, standard designs have been developed for schools and furniture, sites have been selected and contracts organized for 40 schools to be constructed, and an annual school mapping exercise has been undertaken by the MOE, initially with support from UNICEF, to ensure systematic and equitable selection of school construction sites. Implementation, however, has been constrained by the inaccessibility of some areas, lack of capacity on the part of local contractors and construction companies, limitations in banking infrastructure, and a lack of monitoring capacity in the MOE (GoL, 2009*b*).

Besides infrastructural expansion, a number of other initiatives have been taken by the government. Since 2005, it has started implementing its Free and Compulsory Education Policy, within the 'framework of universal primary education (UPE)' (GoL, 2009*c*), officially abolishing tuition fees for public primary schools and reducing them significantly for public secondary schools, as prescribed by the 2001 Liberian Education Law. It has put in place school feeding programmes, established a gender unit within the ministry and prepared a gender policy,

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21. These compulsory 'bush schools' initiated young people to issues such as laws, customs and traditions, respect for elderly, and the extended family system.
22. See LPERP, Component 1: infrastructure expansion and development, 'to address the severe shortage of adequate learning facilities for primary school in the country.' Its objectives are as follows: 45:1 Learner:Classroom Ratio; 65 per cent of learners to have a seat/desk; 60 per cent of schools to have access to clean water; 60 per cent of schools to have low cost latrines; and capacity development in the School Facilities Unit and Procurement Unit of the MOE.

increased funding for the University of Liberia and other accredited universities, rehabilitated regional teacher training institutes, and introduced adult literacy programmes in some counties. As a result, total school enrolments have dramatically increased from 365,475 in 1988/1989 to 465,023 in 2003/2004 to 1,265,513 in 2007/2008,[23] with an increase of 82 per cent in public primary schools and 16 per cent in secondary schools between 2005/2006 and 2007/2008 (GoL, 2008*a*: 112). However, while gross enrolment rates have grown considerably,[24] net enrolment rates have remained very low, with 62 per cent of the primary school age population and 95 per cent of the secondary school age population not enrolled in primary and secondary school respectively (GoL, 2009*d*).[25] Although overall participation is higher if over-age children are considered, these low rates of participation raise questions about the country's ability to achieve MDG and EFA targets, and its prospects for economic and social development.

The government's failure to serve all children and youth under its mandate, despite legal provisions and various promising actions, appears to be due to the remaining barriers to educational access, allowing the system to stay exclusionary. In particular, Liberia's formal school system has not managed to reach the majority of largely poor rural children and youth, leaving most of them without formal education and formal-sector skills. In many rural communities, compulsory primary education is yet to be completely realized for a number of reasons. According to several respondents, policies on free public primary schooling are not being implemented in a systematic manner, thereby limiting the chance of the poor to access education. Despite the official absence of direct costs, primary school fees seem in fact not to have been totally eliminated; up to 24 per cent of household spending goes on education (GoL, 2009*c*). This reality is partly to be explained by the existence of a large array of non-public schools.[26] Accounting for approximately half of the country's schools, and for 43 per cent of primary and 71 per cent of secondary school enrolments (GoL, 2009*e*), these schools are free to set their own fees and to decide on admission. In the words of one respondent, 'Firstly, one big worry is the hike in tuition. Parents won't be able to take their children to school. This could derail the peace. Many high school students are not attending this year because of the fees. This will allow instigators to tell them that the government doesn't care …' (interview #18). Furthermore, indirect costs, lack of facilities due to limited finances and capacity, unofficial entrance examinations,[27] community and parental resistance, as well as low quality barring entry to higher levels of education are all factors that seem to have been keeping children and youth from school (GoL, 2009*c*).

Barriers to access such as geographical location and gender, but especially income, seem to be disproportionately affecting certain groups and individuals. For the reasons previously mentioned, disparities in access are closely related to income: being in the poorest 20 per cent

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23. Drawn from the MOE 1989 Annual Report, 2003/2004 RALS, 2005/2006 School Census and 2007/2008 National School Census Report.

24. Gross enrolment ratios at the primary and secondary levels have grown from 54 per cent and 24 per cent in 1981/1982 to 94 per cent and 33 per cent in 2007/2008 (drawn from the MOE Final Report of the 1984 National Policy Conference on Education and Training and National School Census Data 2007/2008). As far as gross completion rates are concerned, these have increased from an estimated 21 per cent in 2000 to 62 per cent in 2007. Gross completion rates are defined here as 'the number of students, regardless of age, completing the final year of each level of education divided by the population of the official completion age of the level. (World Bank, 2009*b*) The proxy measure usually used for the number of students completing the final year is the number of final year students less the number of repeaters (GoL, 2009*b*: 29).'

25. Notice that estimates based on the CWIQ survey come up with a secondary net enrolment ratio of 15 per cent. Also, a 2007 DHS study found that 56 per cent of females and 39 per cent of males have never attended any school.

26. These include private, mission, and concession sponsored schools, and community funded schools. At the tertiary level, Liberia relies only on one public institution and as many as 22 private institutions.

27. Some schools set entrance examinations for Grade 1 students, against official policy (GoL, 2009*c*). Also, the CWIQ found that three quarters of school leavers were currently not enrolled because they were 'awaiting admission'.

of the population decreases the likelihood of a child enrolling in primary school by 24 per cent. As far as location is concerned, the general increased enrolment rates have not reflected the relative size of the population across counties and districts. Primary enrolment ratios for children of 6–14 years of age seem to range from 66 per cent in Bomi County to 14 per cent in Grand Bassa.[28] Similar variations are found at the junior high school level, which is still part of basic education, with gross enrolment ratios ranging from around 70 per cent in Montserrado to around 10 per cent in River Cess and Gbapolu Counties (GoL, 2009*d*). Actual disparities are, however, likely to be much greater, as county averages mask variations within counties between urban and rural, and isolated areas. To a great extent, this geographical inequality is due to the lack of educational provision in certain areas, especially as far as higher levels of education are concerned. For instance, of 92 education districts, 36 still have no senior high school (GoL, 2009*c*), while still only one tertiary institution is located outside Monrovia; though the government plans to build three community colleges, one in each of the three major regions. As far as gender is concerned, girls appear to be 7 per cent less likely to be enrolled than boys as well as less likely to persevere and graduate.[29] Despite such gender disparities, as well as disproportionately high gender-based violence against girls in schools, there appears to be little educational programming directed at girls or female youth. Additionally, in a context of overall disparity and perception of unfairness, special provisions of educational opportunities to ex-combatants, compared to the few programmes aimed at children and youth who had not fought in the war, appear to be viewed with frustration by some. In the words of one respondent, 'We need to stop paying special attention to the ex-combatants. We need to think about education for all Liberians. We hear about all the scholarships for them. We should think about opportunities for all' (interview #32).

Continued low access to schooling has several negative implications in terms of fragility. First of all, limited access to schooling is likely to lead to poor economic prospects for uneducated and poorly educated children and youth. This group will be disadvantaged at least in formal sector employment, and will run the risk of failing to find a meaningful economic and social place for themselves in either rural or urban Liberia, thereby reinforcing their disengagement and grievance. If coupled with disparities in provision and access, the lack of educational opportunities also runs the risk of fuelling resentment and leading to instability, especially in a country where past exclusion from access to resources and public goods resulted in acute feelings of unfairness and subsequent violent conflict. Secondly, besides allowing education to remain an instrument of privilege, poor access to schooling threatens the country's broad-based short- and long-term economic development by contributing to the low overall level of skills in Liberian society. Additionally, it is likely to weaken people's trust in the government's capacity and willingness to provide essential services. With the lack of education as well as jobs having been specifically mentioned by various sources (including ex-combatants themselves) as a major cause of the war (Richards *et al.,* 2005), such current gaps in educational provision need urgently to be effectively addressed for the sake of peace and stability.

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28. Estimates based on CWIQ data (GoL, 2007*b*).
29. The greatest effect of gender was in combination with other factors. A girl from the poorest 20 per cent of households is 32 per cent less likely to enrol than a girl from the richest 20 per cent; an effect that is doubled compared to boys. Similarly, a girl from a home where the head of household has received less than a primary education is 36 per cent less likely to enrol than a girl from a family whose head has completed primary or higher level of education. Again, the effect is doubled compared to boys.

4.2 Educational opportunities for the youth

The youth, whose structural marginalization is argued to have greatly contributed to the war, presents Liberia with a major challenge today. Liberia's youth, aged 15-35, constitute 28 per cent of the country's population, around 1 million people. An estimated 45 per cent is illiterate, 80 per cent is unemployed,[30] and only 3-4 per cent is reported to be interested in working in the agricultural sector, even though Liberia is a largely rural country. Many young people have not completed basic education, and most have little training in vocational or technical skills. Within this group, females in particular have been less educated and are less skilled, and therefore more socially constrained. Some young people are ex-combatants, while almost all have been deeply affected by the conflict (Walker, Millar Wood, and Allemano, 2009). Left largely uneducated, unemployed, disengaged, and economically and socially marginalized, this is widely perceived to be one of the country's greatest risk factors for renewed tension and conflict. One respondent summarized the situation as follows:

> Though most of Liberia is rural, few youth have an interest in agriculture. Many have relocated to urban areas, but there have been few educational and employment opportunities for them there. Many missed out on education because of the conflict. Those who have received some education say that schooling has not provided them with a basis for livelihood (Walker, Millar Wood, and Allemano, 2009). Linkages between schooling and employment are weak in technical and vocational areas. Youth make up a large proportion of the population. Yet the lack of positive economic, social and political roles for them has left many youth alienated and restive, potentially easily influenced and mobilized.

The lack of youth livelihood training, in particular, has been recognized by many as a major contributor to fragility. One respondent explained, 'If I am trained vocationally, and to be self reliant, if I have all that, I will not join the violence, I will not overthrow the president' (interview #26). The importance attached to education as a gateway to a better livelihood, as well as the relation of education and livelihood to fragility, were highlighted in several interviews with parents and community members. If, on the one hand, education was seen as providing or at least promising economic benefits to individuals and their families, on the other hand schooling appeared to create considerable frustration when perceived to be failing to provide marketable skills, or when its benefits were not manifest. During the interviews, schooling was also commonly linked with fragility, so providing useful occupation for idle youth as well as allowing young people to have a stake in the country's economic and social system means they would be less likely to seek its destruction.

In the face of such challenges and opportunities, resources and programming serving the education and livelihood needs of the youth appear to have been woefully inadequate to date. At present, there are scattered programmes while no consistent strategy has been put into place to serve the current needs of this group. In order to fill this gap, a youth policy, the National Youth Policy and National Youth Policy Action Plan (NYPAP), was drafted in early 2009 by the Ministry of Youth & Sports (MOYS) to guide government initiatives for youth development

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30. 2007 Liberian DHS estimates suggest female unemployment at 40 per cent overall, 64 per cent for girls aged between 15-19 and 46 per cent for girls between 20-24 years of age. Overall male unemployment is estimated at 22 per cent, with 48 per cent for 15-19-year-olds and 30 per cent for 15-19-year-olds (Walker, Millar Wood, and Allemano, 2009). Others estimate unemployment rates as high as 85 per cent (FTI submission (March 2007), cited in Walker, Millar Wood, and Allemano, 2009).

and employment through 2012, including in the area of 'education and training'.[31] The policy was not enacted into law, however, leaving the youth without a core institutional home and bureaucratic constituency, thereby making youth programmes more prone to falling through the cracks in a system preoccupied with the many tasks of reconstruction. As far as education is concerned, with the focus of the ESP being directed toward primary schooling, the needs of youth – especially the need for adult education and accelerated learning programmes, and for technical/vocational skills training linked to employment opportunities – have been largely neglected, disproportionately impacting the poorer and more marginalized children and youth. While initiatives to respond to such needs were undertaken, challenges have remained that clearly impact on fragility.

Accelerated Learning Program (ALP)

As previously pointed out, Liberia has to cope with large numbers of children and youth who missed out on formal education due to the war, and who are generally over-aged. In line with its commitment to facilitating this group's school participation and integration into age-appropriate grades in the regular school system, the government greatly expanded the so-called Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), which had been established in 1998 with UNICEF support based on a model used in Uganda. Its aim was to keep children in school in order to reduce the risk of their recruitment as combatants, and to help in the process of reintegration of ex-combatants into society, as well as provide educational opportunities for older youth through structures separate from conventional primary schools. The programme, typically taught by primary school teachers and using primary school facilities, condensed the six-year primary curriculum into three years. In 2006, the government also initiated the so-called Accelerated Learning Program for Positive Living (ALPP), which included life skills, conflict resolution, civic education, and a community mobilization component involving Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and service learning. In 2007/08, 75,820 students were enrolled in ALP, and 21,807 in ALPP. The target set in the LPERP for ALP was to reach 300,000 students aged 15 by 2010.[32]

The 2009 sector review team looking at ALP identified several successes: implementation in all 15 counties, robust partner and government support, fewer older children enrolled in conventional primary school classes, harmonized ALP curriculum, and development of policy guidelines for implementation of ALP (GoL, 2009*b*). Also, external evaluations found widespread support for ALP and ALPP among teachers and communities, who have requested the programmes be continued and expanded (Coyne, Prince, and Nielson, 2008; Rodriquez, McLaughlin, and Cummings, 2009). The sector review, however, also noted challenges. These include: the lack of precise statistics on completion, effective monitoring and supervision; a lack of clarity on the future of ALP, scheduled to close down in 2011, even though the ESP envisages ALP enrolments and costs until 2020;[33] the lack of transition plans from its temporary project status to a longer term programme status[34] in the context of a continuing existence of sizeable

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31. The NYPAP organizes activities into nine strategic areas: (1) education and training; (2) youth employment; (3) youth sexual and reproductive health (SRH); (4) youth and conflict; (5) environment; (6) sports and recreation; (7) gender equity and women's empowerment; (8) youth leadership; (9) drug abuse and crime (USAID, 2009).
32. See LPERP, Component 4: accelerated learning programs for children/youth, 'who were not able to benefit from a primary school education because of the war' (GoL, 2008*a*).
33. In four counties, students started ALP programmes for the first time in September 2009, completing in 2012.
34. There is agreement that such a programme should be under the MOE and funded by the MOE, but there is no consensus on what the programme should look like.

numbers of over-age children/youth who have not yet been reached (GoL, 2009*b*);[35] and the need to ensure that ALP does not replace conventional primary school for students of primary school age (GoL, 2009*b*).[36] Also, despite widespread support among parents and community members, ALP/ALPP programmes have been criticized by youth participants for their lack of technical/vocational content focusing on the development of job-related skills, as well as links to vocational programmes and employment (USAID, 2006*a*; Coyne, Prince, and Nielson, 2008; Walker, Millar Wood, and Allemano, 2009).

Technical/Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is reportedly one of the most needed and requested type of educational opportunities for the youth in Liberia. As stated by Richards *et al.*, 'They [fighters] tell us their greatest felt need is for skills training, to allow them to re-establish their worth by performing a useful role in community rebuilding. Much of their current frustration centres on the slowness of such training programs to get off the ground' (2005: 9–10).

Largely destroyed by the war, the TVET system consists today of 113 institutions offering 23 courses of instruction (GoL 2009*a*) and is characterized by particularly low enrolments relative to the large number of youth in the country. As stated in the ESP, this system is extremely weak and in disarray. This was reported to be characterized by:

- Enrolment of poorly educated, unemployable youth.
- Uncoordinated, unregulated and fragmented delivery systems.
- Inadequate and limited financing and poor management and organization leading to frictions among line authorities.
- Weak monitoring mechanism.
- Obsolete equipment, outdated curriculum and low quality training programmes.
- Dilapidated structures and weak staffing (in terms of number and quality).
- Produced unskilled graduates who are mainly unemployed.

The report went on to note that 'training methods are archaic and have no connection with the labour market ... and training programmes were without diversification that would meet the labour market demand.' Most alarmingly, the report stated that the 'majority of the TVET graduates interviewed are unemployable' (GoL, 2009*c*).[37]

As argued by Sommers (2007) in a study on youth employment in West Africa, including Liberia, the marketplace irrelevance of such programmes is a major reason for the limited employment prospects of graduates. As he points out, youth programmes have generally failed to incorporate skills training. Moreover, many Liberian youth aspire to and are already living in urban areas and working in the informal sector, while programmes have focused their efforts

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35. Although as of 2009/2010 there are ALP programmes in all counties, some districts lack programmes, so not all children/youth in need of ALP have access. The ESP states, 'To a large extent the primary school enrolment is a fair reflection of the school age population distribution but the ALP enrolment has been largely determined by availability in the county than by demand hence at the time of the 2007/2008 census no ALP enrolment was recorded for Sinoe County' (GoL, 2009*c*: 51).
36. In some communities, ALP is the only schooling available. Additionally, its three- (rather than six-) year curriculum is attractive to some parents in communities where there are conventional primary schools.
37. Similarly, the report signed by heads of UN Agencies in the country on the UN Joint Program for Employment and Empowerment of Young Women and Men in Liberia noted that, 'Liberia's Technical and Vocational Education and Training system, (TVET) is extremely weak. It suffers from outdated curricula; lack of standardization and an extreme shortage of qualified instructors. The system is in dire need of a strategy and operational framework'. Cited by GoL, 2009*c*: 105.

primarily on rural areas and/or the formal sector, which is unlikely to grow at a rate sufficient to hire most young people in the near future. Additionally, programmes have tended to adopt a supply-driven approach to programming, sometimes providing training for particular skills far in excess of local demand. A series of other common flaws are mentioned by Sommers. These include: the failure to pay sufficient attention to the particular needs of poor youth and female youth, often benefiting the better-off who are easier to reach; the failure to address, even exacerbating, the social exclusion of the youth by leading to menial, even stigmatized jobs with poor future prospects; the failure to take advantage of youth's assets and potential contributions, instead focusing on their deficits; the failure to involve the youth in designing, implementing, and evaluating programmes; and the lack of rigorous evaluation.

In a fragile context characterized by insufficient resources and over-stretched capacities, the general challenges related to this sector are amplified. First of all, skills training and technical/ vocational education systems are costly due to the high costs of staff, equipment, materials, and maintenance/servicing costs, and the low output from the system.[38] Faced with many needs and insufficient financial resources, the ESP and its funding scenarios suggest that new funds for the development of the TVET system will inevitably be limited. Secondly, this system faces the difficulty of linking skills curricula with job opportunities in the market. The success of efforts toward this end is especially hampered by the general lack of employment opportunities due to structural, macro-level factors related to fragility. These include small formal economic sectors, state corruption and lack of accountability, high levels of inequality, and 'social, political, and economic distance between poor youth and those with power and influence' (Sommers, 2007: 5), urban migration, and lack of capital. Thirdly, the system is faced with the challenges of coordination across ministries responsible for youth, training, and employment. In this regard, the ESP mentions coordination with the MOYS as part of its sector-wide framework, which allows for greater cross-ministerial coordination on cross-cutting issues. The difficulty of such coordination is however evident in Liberia. Here, several coordinating bodies have been created to deal with TVET. The most important one is the National Council on TVET, an 18-member institution comprised of nine ministers[39] as well as senior representatives of industry and concessions together with labour unions. This mechanism, however, has found it difficult to meet regularly and, as a result, the sub-sector has lacked leadership. Furthermore, a National Working Group on TVET has been called to life, but does not appear to be functioning well either (GoL, 2009*c*). In addition, the government, in partnership with the UN, is establishing the United Nations Joint Program for Youth Employment and Empowerment (JPYEE) to promote youth employment as a means to promote economic growth as well as 'sustained peace and security' (Walker, Millar Wood, and Allemano, 2009). This has a significant TVET component, which encompasses the overall reform of the system.[40] All these efforts, however, are still largely at the planning stages and while mechanisms for cross-ministerial coordination are in place, little coordination has taken place to date.

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38. Unit costs for the TVET system are three times higher than for tertiary education and 44 times higher than primary education (GoL, 2009*e*).
39. Including: the Ministers of Planning, Education, Youth & Sports, Agriculture, Labour, Finance, plus 3 others.
40. The comprehensive programme includes several components: Institutional capacity building for the MOYS and for youth-led organizations; skills training for employment, including upgrading the Informal Apprenticeship System (IAS); expanding community-based training; training in cleaning, maintenance, and waste management; reform of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); reform of TVET curricula; developing a TVET teacher training programme; facilitating the skills-to-work transition; empowerment and social cohesion of youth; and promoting decent work for youth in the informal sector, in agriculture and through special employment schemes in waste management and construction.

Continued inadequate attention of the educational needs of Liberia's youth has several negative implications for fragility. First of all, left uneducated, unemployed, and disengaged, and consequently economically and socially marginalized, the youth has the potential to represent an easy target for political mobilization and therefore a major threat to security and stability. Moreover, by failing to invest in educational opportunities for the youth, the positive potential of this large group in its contribution towards the country's political, economic, social, and cultural development runs the risk of being squandered.

4.3 Quality and relevance: teachers, curricula and textbooks

As previously mentioned in relation to the need for economic relevance of educational opportunities for the youth, simple access to education is not a sufficient condition for guaranteeing the mitigation and prevention of fragility and conflict. The quality of educational provision is no less important than educational provision *tout court*.[41]

As evidenced by official statistics showing low persistence rates as well as from anecdotes by several of the interviewees,[42] Liberia's education system continues to be of poor quality. The poor quality of education is both largely caused and revealed by several factors: teachers are poorly trained and often lack basic qualifications; the curriculum is outdated and of little relevance; and textbooks, teachers' guides, and other instructional materials are outdated and in short supply.

The current situation is to a large extent the result of the war, which had devastating effects on the quality of schooling in Liberia. During the war, school buildings, textbooks, and instructional materials were destroyed, and teachers had been killed or had fled. In addition to the destruction of instructional inputs, much of the expertise and institutional memory of education officials at all levels was lost, and the processes for running a school system – curriculum revision, textbook procurement and distribution – had to be recreated. Also, the large number of over-age children attending primary school, and the resulting diversity of student ages in the classroom, affected the quality of education by complicating the instructional work and developmental and socialization functions of schools.[43]

The government has shown concern about the low quality of national education. Five of the seven challenges cited by the PRS (as well as five of its strategic objectives) relate to quality, including, 'inadequate finance to keep pace with demands for quality education'; 'outdated curriculum and inadequate textbooks, chairs, desks, and school supplies'; 'insufficient numbers of well-trained, qualified and motivated teachers'; 'the understaffed, over-crowded public university'; and 'poor quality programmes at some tertiary institutions' (GoL 2008*a*). The ESP also

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41. 'Quality' can refer to different aspects of education – quality of inputs (buildings, equipment, texts, etc.), quality of processes (teaching-learning processes, curriculum, rates of persistence and completion), quality of outputs (learning achievement, etc.), quality of outcomes (more skilled population, etc.) well as quality by reputation, quality by exclusiveness, and quality by social status (Williams, 2002).

42. According to official statistics, 40 per cent of Grade 1 students do not 'survive' to Grade 6 (GoL 2009*c*), and the low quality of Liberian schooling was mentioned by many respondents. Several respondents relayed anecdotes about college graduates who could not complete an application for employment, or primary school graduates who could not read. Some spoke of low scores on the West Africa Examination Council exams.

43. While 6 is the official age to begin primary school, the CWIQ survey found that almost 40 per cent of 8-year-olds and 30 per cent of 9-year-olds who are enrolled in school are enrolled in preschool. At the same time, many over-age children and youth are enrolled in primary school. The 2007/2008 school census found that approximately 63 per cent of children enrolled in primary school were above the official age of 11 (GoL, 2009*c*), with significant numbers of students over 20 years old. Finally, a number of primary-age children attend ALP classes, which are intended for older children.

details ambitious plans for improving the quality of education, including upgrading facilities and furniture, a revision of curriculum, printing and distribution of textbooks, and teacher training.

Teachers

As recognized by the ESP, 'the quality of education in a school is mainly determined by the quality of teachers.' Liberia faces three main challenges when it comes to the teaching profession: the upgrading of skills of existing teachers and the training of new teachers; teachers' recruitment and retention; and reform of teacher salaries and procedures for teacher payment.

The primary challenge concerns the chronic shortage of qualified teachers. As of 2007, up to 62 per cent of teachers were reported to be unqualified.[44] While this has been a long-standing issue in Liberia's history of education, the war clearly worsened the situation. During the fighting, many teachers were killed or seriously injured, and many more fled, leading to great losses to the teaching force. Moreover, all three Rural Teacher Training Institutes (RTTIs), the primary institutions responsible for the preparation of primary school teachers, were destroyed. As a result, the system has up until today relied heavily on untrained and 'volunteer' teachers. As much of the training received by teachers was in the form of 3–6-week crash courses offered by NGOs shortly after the end of the war, there is an urgent need today to upgrade these teachers' skills, as well as to standardize training programmes (GoL 2009*c*). In particular, such training is needed in public and community schools, which appear to have higher proportions of untrained teachers than private or mission schools.

In this context, the PRS set a goal to train 50 per cent of Liberian teachers by 2010. The PRS also estimated that to keep up with the demand for free and compulsory primary education, up to 1,000 teachers would need to be trained every year (GoL 2009*c*).

In order to achieve these goals, primary pre-service and in-service training has been provided through the Liberia Teacher Training Project (LTTP) funded by USAID. For this purpose, LTTP rehabilitated two of the three residential RTTIs, which had all been destroyed during the war, and which had produced no graduates between 1986 and 2009. Two additional RTTIs are also scheduled to be completed soon. As residential RTTIs are currently unsustainable without external funds,[45] LTTP is also developing distance programmes to help upgrade teachers' skills. While the potential total output of the three RTTIs is 710 trainees per year, the current output of 471 trainees per year seems unlikely to solve the need for 16,000 trained teachers (Rodriquez, McLaughlin, and Cummings, 2009). Similarly, with a total enrolment of approximately 250 trainees and an annual intake of 40, the four tertiary institutions offering teacher training for the senior high school level in Liberia have proven inadequate to deal with a projected senior high school enrolment of 86,741 students in 2011 (GoL 2009*c*). At the same time, only 5 per cent of individuals admitted to university are reportedly interested in teaching, despite the availability of scholarships. This has resulted in a shortage of subject matter specialist teachers at the high school level as well.

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44. Only 24 per cent of primary teachers have the C certificate required to teach at primary school level. Out of 22,253 primary school teachers in the 2007 school census, 13,301 were untrained. The mid-term evaluation of USAID's LTTP project found that many candidates for pre-service training could not be accepted because they had failed a literacy test (Rodriquez, McLaughlin, and Cummings, 2009).
45. With their newly reopened residential facilities, relatively low enrolment as well as allowances for Liberian lecturers from the diaspora, the teacher training institutes cost five times as much per student as tertiary education.

When it comes to teachers' recruitment and retention, there appears to be a particular need in Liberia to deal with the shortage of young teachers and an ageing teaching force,[46] as well as with the shortage of female teachers[47] and teachers willing to be posted to rural areas. Some respondents at the district and county levels also mentioned the difficulty to hire, and time required, to get new teachers on the payroll, which in some cases may take up to a year.[48] This lengthy process is partly the result of the wish of authorities to deal with the issue of 'ghost' teachers, believed by several respondents to be an important source of corruption. As phrased by one interviewee, 'Schools are more corrupt than we think. The school system is rotten. Too much money is attached to schools, especially those with the highest standards' (interview #55).[49] To deal with this issue, the ministry is planning to establish a teacher database to track teachers and identify and remove 'ghost' teachers (GoL, 2009*c*).

Connected to the problematic issue of teachers' recruitment and retention, one likely reason for the seeming unattractiveness of the teaching profession, especially among young people, is related to teachers' low salaries. While these were raised from US$50 to US$100 per month between 2005 and 2009,[50] payment, however, remains challenging. With the lack of rural banking systems, teachers' pay cheques are hand-carried to county seats each month where teachers must travel, pick up their cheques and cash them. This process can take up to a week for teachers from the more remote schools, often forcing schools to close for several days each month during the pay period (GoL, 2009*c*).

Curriculum and textbooks

Discussions on the quality of education cannot ignore the issues of curriculum and textbooks. In Liberia, curriculum and textbooks are both outdated. The primary curriculum currently in use dates from 1996. Recently, however, a new curriculum has been developed to meet West African Examinations Council (WAEC) requirements and includes HIV/AIDS education, peace education, human rights, and critical thinking. Even though the new curriculum is ready, the pilot phase was postponed until the 2009/2010 school year due to a shortage of funding. Once tested and finalized, the new curriculum will need to be integrated into the teacher training curriculum and in-service training programmes (GoL, 2009*b*). As far as textbooks are concerned, these had not been distributed for years, leading to extremely high textbook: pupil ratios, varying from area to area; between 2:1 in Maryland County and 26:1 in Bomi County (GoL 2009*c*). Moreover, many teachers have a shortage of teachers' guides and sometimes textbooks for themselves, forcing them to teach from notes in their personal notebooks and to use whatever materials they can find, while those schools with the means to do so have been forced to acquire supplementary texts or adapt available materials.[51] Recently, in an attempt to reduce the textbook: pupil ratio

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46. Two thirds of teachers are over 40 years old and 35 per cent are over 50.
47. Two figures are given for the number of female teachers, 12 per cent and 21 per cent, based on different data.
48. Many of these problems are not new. The 1988 Human Resources Assessment undertaken by USAID reported that 29 signatures were required at that time to complete the paperwork to hire a teacher (USAID, 1988).
49. On the matter of corruption, one respondent stated that, 'People are not educated because [those in power] stole resources. In Monrovia, for example, students were sitting on the floor [because desks and chairs were not provided]' (interview #48).
50. This is 3.5 times the per capita gross domestic product (GDP) and exceeds FTI benchmarks.
51. The research team visited several schools that were both relatively well off and quite poor. The well off schools had more textbooks and were able to compensate for any shortfall; they offered their teachers greater mentoring and support, and called on alumni from the diaspora and external organizations inside and outside Liberia for resources. Conversely, the poor schools had less resources to begin with and had very few external sources of support. These factors disadvantaged children from poor schools and decreased their odds of accessing high quality secondary schools and higher education.

to 2:1, 1.2 million textbooks based on the old curriculum were printed and made ready for distribution from September 2009 (GoL, 2009*c*).

In addition to being outdated, curriculum and textbooks in Liberia appear to be of little relevance. In fact, they seem to have failed to provide useful knowledge, attitudes and skills in the economic and social context in which Liberian learners live. This failure to provide relevant education was expressed in the 2007 Core Welfare Indicators Questionnaire (CWIQ) survey (GoL, 2007*b*), where it was revealed that the major reason given by respondents for non-enrolment of previously enrolled students was that school was 'useless/uninteresting'. While the issue of relevance is mentioned several times, both in the PRS and the ESP, this is neither defined nor discussed in detail. In a context where reconstruction efforts had been largely focused on getting basic education running and available to all, relevance is likely to have been a lesser priority. Although it is not clearly defined in official documents, relevance in the case of Liberia can be seen to refer to the extent to which schooling helps learners assume productive adult roles in a post-conflict, agrarian but rapidly urbanizing society with a relatively small formal economy and a much larger informal economy, and which is characterized by an ethnically diverse and still divided population. Hence, relevance in Liberia can be seen to have primarily both an economic and a civic/social nature.

While the issue of marketplace relevance has, to a large extent, already been addressed in the discussion on educational opportunities for the youth, the issue of civic relevance deserves particular attention here. Civic relevance is used here to refer to a diverse set of knowledge, attitudes and skills related to citizens' social and political rights and responsibilities to the community, the nation, and the world. Related topical areas include peace education, human rights education, history and civic education, conflict resolution, and critical thinking.

Like marketplace relevance, civic relevance was mentioned several times during field interviews as being at the core of quality education, as well as having a potential conflict mitigating function. In particular, developing the ability to discern truth from falsehood was largely viewed as an important civic goal of education, which could prevent the successful manipulation of young people by self-interested politicians and warlords. Instruction related to war and peace was also mentioned as being important in promoting stability and social cohesion. One respondent, for instance, explained how, 'In social studies we talk about issues of Liberia and the importance of one Liberia. In art class we talk about the bad side of the war. I ask them not to use guns to fight war, instead use a pencil to fight. Drawings are the most powerful weapon' (interview #4). Another respondent argued that, 'Peace education is also necessary ... It should be part of national curriculum. Only the Catholic schools are teaching peace. We are waiting for that curriculum' (interview #33).

The teaching of the Liberian conflict, highly relevant from a civic and social perspective, has been particularly challenging and controversial. The reviewed 1996 social studies and history curriculum materials cited topics to be covered, including the founding of the state, the historic marginalization of the indigenous peoples, the coup and Doe years, and, to some extent, the Taylor years, including the civil war and its resolution. While integrating such sensitive topics, however, available materials appear to give little indication of what the teacher should say about each of the listed topics. Interviewed teachers, for their part, admitted taking a 'future-oriented' approach to the conflict, focusing on the future rather than dwelling on the past. Such an approach is broadly consistent with some of the fears raised in relation to the implementation

of the recommendations of the TRC that focusing on the past would do no good and stir up trouble. Moreover, rather than 'dwelling' on the conflict, teachers and other respondents felt that it was more important to provide knowledge about Liberia, and to promote a strong national identity and feelings of loyalty and love towards the nation, as well as the positive virtues of citizenship, good neighbourliness, and respect for others. In so doing, schools were believed to have the potential to function as sites for peacemaking by promoting harmony and social cohesion among children and youth of different ethnic groups, and between ex-combatants and non-ex-combatants. With regard to the teaching of the Liberian conflict, it is worth mentioning that efforts are currently underway at the University of Liberia and Cuttington University to offer academic programmes to critically examine the roots of the conflict in the historical and cultural context.

Human rights education, relevant in a country that has experienced a long history of abuses, has also been controversial. A curriculum was recently developed by the MOE in collaboration with UNESCO, copies of which were scheduled to be distributed to schools soon thereafter. The curriculum emphasizes a broad understanding of human rights, consistent with much international practice, including values of respect and tolerance. However, this was criticized by some parents for teaching what they perceived to be values inconsistent with those of the family and the community. In the words of a respondent,

> Rural farming parents were complaining about free and compulsory education. Children claim their rights in the wrong way. Children tell their parents they should not be assigned chores. There is not a good understanding of the need for taking responsibility on children's side – freedom, rights are emphasized without the responsibilities. Once Liberians understand human rights correctly, I think they will agree. With the current understanding, they will not agree with international organizations' rights-based approaches. (Interview #47)

Considering the vast impact of the war on Liberia's children and young people, formal psychosocial programmes are also to be considered highly socially relevant in this post-conflict country. Reportedly however, relatively few of those who had fought and/or had been victimized during the war seem to have taken part in such programmes. In general, efforts to address students' psychosocial issues – either directly or through school work, including tutoring, informal counselling, and conflict resolution in the classroom – appear to have been largely *ad hoc*, varying according to the need, willingness, and capabilities of teachers.

As with access, low quality education has the potential to compound some of the problems of existing fragility and to dilute the positive effects education might have in mitigating fragility and conflict. In particular, low quality education is likely to fail to provide the skills needed for both individual and national development, as well as to prepare national leadership. A barely literate population is also likely to be more susceptible to the manipulative claims of political leaders than a better educated population. In addition, unequal distribution of quality education might have implications for the people's faith in the government's commitment to equity and fairness, and in the possibility of overcoming historical disadvantage and the effects of exclusion through education.

4.4 Governance, management, and financing

Poor governance seems to have been at the core of political, economic, social, and environmental fragility, both in the past and in the present. The education sector not only has been greatly

affected by overall poor governance but has also reflected general patterns and trends of concentration of power and lack of accountability, which have tended to favour mismanagement and corruption.

The new government has shown its willingness to promote good governance in education. Positive developments in this regard are most visible today at the level of policy-making and planning. Since the signing of the CPA, a number of policy and planning documents have in fact been developed by the government to improve educational governance and management, which had been disrupted by the war. The development of the ESP in particular, has been a major step forward in the ministry's management of education, signalling a clear shift from stop-gap provision to more systematic, strategic, and long-term sectoral planning and policy-making. This text adopted a strategic sectoral approach, set targets, cost them out, discussed trade-offs, and specified indicators for monitoring achievement. Among other things, this comprehensive document devoted 3 of its 12 chapters to issues of governance and management, monitoring, and financing education. Similarly, the PRS specified 'management' as one of its seven strategic objectives in relation to education. As stated in the text, the aim is now to 'Strengthen the overall governance, management, and financial basis of the education system' (GoL 2008*a*: 112–113).

When it comes to good governance and good management, decentralization has often been suggested as a crucial measure. In Liberia, decentralization policies specific to the education sector have been drafted as part of the larger decentralization effort being undertaken to transform governance with the intention to allow more space for democratic and local participation, as well as to improve both management capacity to allocate national resources and improve delivery of public services and accountability. The 2001 Education Law that governs education in Liberia explicitly stated that education should be delivered 'through a high degree of decentralization by the delegation of a wider scope of authority and responsibilities to the 'grassroots' (i.e. counties and districts) with strong county and district education offices (CEOs and DEOs) representing the Ministry of Education (MOE)' (Education Law of 2001, cited in GoL, 2009*c*).[52] In this framework of decentralization, each school, managed by the school principal, is to establish a Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) as well as a School Management Committee (SMC) with the responsibility to 'provide oversight to the school principal, oversee school performance, monitor financial expenditure, ensure availability of relevant school statistics, and provide annual feedback on school performance' (GoL, 2009*c*: 151).

Despite the existence of such decentralization policies, implementation has lagged behind. To date – as also pointed out by several interviewees – few education functions have been decentralized to county and district levels. Most decision-making continues to be concentrated at the central ministry, with capacity at the top levels being limited by the workload and the inadequate number of personnel. Conversely, at the more local levels, CEOs and DEOs have little or no decision-making authority or discretionary budget, as well as limited technical capacity. According to the ESP, 'In practice ... because of the strong residual effect of the years of conflict, decisions are primarily taken at the national level and instructions passed on to the counties and districts' (GoL, 2009*c*: 150). Similarly, the Country Status Report (CSR) states that:

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52. The Education Law gives responsibility for public education to the MOE, led by the minister and three departments: Administration, Instruction, and Planning, each directed by a deputy minister. At the decentralized level, the 15 counties and 86 districts are headed by county and district education officers. While the minister and the deputy ministers are political appointees, the county and district education officers are civil servants.

In Liberia, there are no local government structures which have legal responsibility for the provision of education services. Accordingly, decentralization in Liberia can be described as 'de-concentration' of responsibilities within a vertically integrated ministry, rather than 'devolution' where education officials are accountable to elected local representatives. Some attempt is being made to address the problem through 'a draft policy on decentralization and local governance,' however this policy is 'opaque on the specific education functions that would be retained by the central government and which devolved to county governments' (CSR, cited in GoL, 2009*c:* 150).

At the local level, many schools also continue to lack fully functioning PTAs or SMCs, consequently reducing their regular oversight. As stated by the ESP, the conditions for effective decentralization with a clear delineation of responsibilities at central and decentralized levels, with authority at decentralized levels to act, and with monitoring and accountability mechanisms, as well as capacity and resources at each level to carry out responsibilities (Welsh and McGinn, 1999), seem yet to be in place. Furthermore, the implementation of decentralization at all levels is to a large extent limited by poor infrastructure and limited resources for travel, which constrain communication between central ministry officials, county and district education officials, and school officials.[53] Consequently, efficiency and effectiveness have suffered, while the accountability to local officials and communities and the broader participation in decision-making and school management envisioned by the PRS has not been realized.

The monitoring of education – another crucial measure for promoting good governance and good management – has been foreseen and is required in the government's planning documents, most notably the PRS and the ESP. Admirably, various data are regularly collected in Liberia and utilized in service delivery and policy-making. An important achievement in this regard has been the establishment within the MOE of an Education Management Information System (EMIS) aimed at tracking educational indicators. This has produced reliable education statistics for 2007/2008 and 2008/2009, which are crucial to develop reliable plans and budgets, and to calculate measures of internal efficiency. Importantly, while PRS and ESP indicators were not designed to focus directly on issues related to fragility, census data on numbers of students, schools, teachers, textbooks, school furniture, and school feeding, available from pre-primary through senior high school, have been disaggregated by gender, age, grade, type of school, proprietor, location, and disability status, thereby allowing to track disparities (GoL, 2008*b*). However, ethnicity or income levels have not been taken into account, nor have statistics been regularly collected on children and youth who are not in school. Fortunately, household surveys and special studies, such as the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) and the CWIQ survey (GoL, 2007*b*), have partially filled this statistical gap by taking 'income' into consideration when collecting information on the distribution of educational opportunities and resources. Disparities have also mostly been discussed in terms of access indicators. As far as quality is concerned, indicators have mainly been defined in terms of inputs, for example textbook-student ratios and, to a certain degree, process measures of internal efficiency such as completion rates. Conversely, the distribution of quality as measured by learning outcomes or other processes, or of teacher quality, seems to be lacking. While overall progress and achievements are remarkable, limited finance and capacity have precluded close monitoring of all government projects, such as the construction of schools, as well as the monitoring of schools themselves, providing opportunities

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53. Lack of transport, for instance, limits the CEO's ability to inspect schools. The ESP reports that a CEO in Sinoe County was able to visit only 20 of the 189 schools in his district during the 2007/2008 school year (GoL, 2009*c*).

for corruption and poor performance (GoL, 2009*b*). In addition, as the government is only now in the process of developing systems to track donors' external development funding, the extent to which it systematically monitors educational activities funded or implemented by external agencies is unclear.

As previously illustrated with regard to access and quality, the implementation of policies and initiatives aimed to promote good governance in education has stalled mainly due to ongoing limited capacities of the government at the level of management, a lack of skilled manpower, and substantial gaps between vast needs and limited resources. In this context, the government took steps to recognize and address such obstacles to effective service delivery. The PRS, in particular, identified two 'key challenges' in relation to management, namely, 'inadequate and undefined sources of finance that will enable the sector to keep pace with the ever increasing demand for quality and relevant education; and weak capacity for management and governance from central to the local level ...' (GoL, 2008*a*: 111).

Today capacity is weak at all levels – central, county, district, school, and community – thereby seriously undermining the effectiveness of government reforms. Overall, top officials and senior management staff are capable, but over-burdened; mid levels are thinly staffed, and largely lack experience and training; and county and district level staff have differing levels of capacity, with some being quite capable, but lacking the authority and/or means to work effectively, and others needing considerable training. The most capable staff are also at risk of recruitment by international organizations or NGOs, which generally offer higher salaries. Even if trained and capable, individuals have also to rely on the broader environment. Capacity development is in fact a complex process involving four levels: individual, organizational, institutional, and political/social/economic contextual (Davies, 2009; UNESCO, 2008). As a result of protracted conflict, challenges at these various levels are considerable due to the rather chaotic environment that has characterized post-war Liberia. Political, social, and economic institutions were disrupted; and major banking systems, school systems, infrastructure at the macro level, as well as many of the predictable processes and systems at the micro level were destroyed. As a result, many potentially routine tasks are today dealt with in an *ad hoc* and irregular manner, while a frequent 'reinvention of the wheel' has slowed down the work flow. In the midst of institution building, a national capacity development strategy has been designed but is still awaiting funding to be implemented.

As far as financing is concerned, given the extent of devastation in the conflict and the great needs for reconstruction, Liberia is challenged today to mobilize sufficient resources to fund its post-war efforts. Though the economy has grown and government revenues have increased since 2003, a large gap remains between the government's plans and its available revenue.

Considered by a European Commission report on governance as, 'The main risk to longer-term education sector resilience' (EC, 2009: 13), current under-investment by Liberia's government is revealed by several indicators. While state funding of the education sector has increased in recent years from US$11.1 million in 2006/2007 to a projected US$25 million in 2009/2010, in terms of education's share of the national budget, allocations have fluctuated around 7–8 per cent, less than half the EFA–FTI target of 20 per cent (GoL, National Budget,

various years).[54] The government's under-investment in education was also suggested by the CWIQ household survey, which found that despite pervasive poverty, households provide three fourths of the total funding of primary education (GoL, 2007*b*). This can partly be explained by the large number of private and mission schools, which are free to set their own fees. While this approach has the merit to engage many providers to share in educating the country's children, it also runs the risk of reducing commitment on the part of the elite to improvements in government schooling, as well as perpetuating informal exclusionary practice and exacerbating disparities in access to quality education between the well-off and the poor. As opposed to non-government schools, public primary schools, which are not permitted by policy to charge fees, are faced with the problem of how to replace this main source of discretionary funding that is crucial to ensure quality. While a school grant system has been initiated to overcome this problem, this has been hampered by the low levels of funding provided, as well as by the lack of banking infrastructure in many rural areas, thereby inevitably affecting the quality of the public school system.

In a context of great need and pervasive poverty on the part of both the Liberian government and society at large, the international community has played a major role in financing education in Liberia. During and in the aftermath of the war, with the collapse of central government in much of the country, external agencies – international and bilateral funding organizations and NGOs – took a leading role in the provision of education. This extensive role of the international community in providing resources to the country's education sector continues today. For 2009/2010, for instance, US$45 million was allocated to Liberian education by donors as compared to government allocations of US$25 million. Of this, 86 per cent aims to support basic education; primarily teacher training, accelerated learning programmes, school construction, and textbook procurement (EC, 2009). As far as funding modalities are concerned, there has been little change over the past five years (EC, 2009). Most external funding is still off-budget and channelled directly to implementing agencies rather than through government budgets.[55] On the one hand, this reality suggests that development partners do not yet trust government systems of accountability and finance, and, on the other hand, that development funding is still approached from the perspective of emergency and project-based aid, despite a number of improvements in government operations (EC, 2009). While appropriate when donors seek to provide support in contexts where government planning, budgeting, financial management, and accounting systems are not fully in place, and capacities are limited in terms of manpower and resources, protracted external project funding does little to build government capacity and a sense of ownership in view of sustainability (Brannelly and Ndaruhutse, 2008). Furthermore, while necessary for recovery from conflict, it runs the risk of substituting government funding and of leading to dependence and a reflexive tendency to look externally when resources are

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54. In the 2007/2008 financial year, the government spent a total of US$22,794,473 (13.6 per cent) of its recurrent expenditure on education. This is lower that expenditure levels in many other Sub-Saharan countries (GoL, 2009*e*). Overall government education expenditures in 2007/2008 made up approximately 2.9 per cent of GDP, again lower than that in post-conflict countries such as Burundi with 5.1 per cent in 2005, Rwanda with 3.8 per cent in 2005, Mozambique with 3.7 per cent in 2004, and Sierra Leone with 3.8 per cent in 2005 (World Bank, 2008*b*). Relative to 16 other West African and post-conflict countries, Liberia is eleventh in public spending as percentage of per capita GDP at the primary level, eighth at the junior high, thirteenth at the senior high level and sixteenth at the tertiary level (GoL, 2009*e*).

55. Of US$450 million total overseas development assistance projected for 2009/10, only US$23.3 million – grants from the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the EC – appear in the body of the government budget. Of the total, 51 per cent is USAID funding of externally managed projects, 25 per cent from other funding sources for external projects, 15 per cent will fund GoL-managed projects, 7 per cent is from the pooled fund, and 2 per cent is in budgetary support (EC, 2009). Since its establishment, the Liberian Education Pooled Fund, which has been found to be effective in supporting government capacity development through creative approaches to funding while addressing donor concerns about accountability and management, has received no new infusions of funding.

needed.[56] A number of initiatives have been taken to obviate this situation and shift donor roles from direct providers of services to supporters of government in service provision. Apart from establishing the Liberia Education Pooled Fund (LEPF), with the aim to address the dilemma of funding nascent government systems, allowing for government ownership, discretion and responsibility while maintaining mutual accountability – and which has been found to be a flexible and timely funding mechanism – the World Bank and the African Development Bank have provided grants, while the EC is developing plans to provide direct budgetary support (EC, 2009). Ultimately, as planning and management systems are developed and the ministry responds to its many challenges, the Liberian government hopes support can be obtained through the EFA-FTI framework or other mechanisms.

With the government moving from short-term project-based provision and reliance on external assistance toward long-term strategic, data-based, and budgeted planning with locally derived revenue as a basis for programming, external support of government delivery clearly requires new skills on the part of assisting agencies. These relate in particular to the need to bring one's programmes into alignment with local systems, harmonize and coordinate programmes with other development agencies, and implement systems of mutual accountability, as spelled out in the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness (OECD, 2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (OECD, 2008*a*). In this regard, steps are being taken to implement the Paris Principles and to strengthen coordination among development partners, between development partners and the ministry, and with implementing partners. Ministry officials and donor representatives for instance, have worked together on a number of task forces and other joint planning groups. These include the Sector Steering Committee chaired by the ministry, and the Education Sector Development Committee (ESDC), established in July 2009 at the end of the country's first post-conflict education sector review and that brought together national stakeholders, development partners, and implementing partners. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, the Ministry of Planning is now in the process of establishing systems for external agencies to report their support in order to respond to the challenge of monitoring project-based aid.

Strong and good governance and management in education has important implications for fragility. First of all, issues of management are crucial for the full and effective implementation of educational policies and reforms. As has appeared several times throughout this analysis on education and fragility in Liberia, achievements in reconstructing and reforming the sector, and in promoting and guaranteeing equal access to quality and relevant education in a context of overall fragility, are frequently hampered by structural weaknesses related to governance, management, and financing. Inadequate technical and financial capacity, in particular, seem to have often been at the base of the limited success of efforts geared towards addressing the fragility of the education sector, thereby allowing, on the one hand, to perpetuate patterns and dynamics of fragility both at the sectoral and the macro level and, on the other hand, failing to exploit the potential of a reformed sector to mitigate and counter political, economic, and social aspects of fragility. Moreover, as the education sector employs one third of Liberia's civil service, good management is likely to have significant positive repercussions on the general improvement of governance in the country as a whole. This could thus considerably contribute

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56. Almost everyone with whom the team spoke in the context of an agency or NGO was receiving and/or seeking external support for one project or another. While recognizing the pervasive poverty facing much of the population, and the limited ability of government to generate additional revenue, it is interesting how rarely a local source of income was mentioned, even if used to supplement or match external funding.

to the core PRS task of building strong systems of democratic and accountable governance, particularly important given Liberia's history of bad governance, which has been manifest in the systematic exclusion of some citizens from participation in decision-making, in the lack of space for participation of civil society in governance of public resources and services, as well as in the mismanagement of natural resources (GoL, 2009*c*: 149). Additionally, with education being one of the most visible government activities, good management in this sector is likely to build confidence among the people in the government's willingness and capacity to serve all.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

This study has shown that, while there seems to be a high degree of political will to address the root causes and the legacies of Liberia's longstanding history of fragility and insecurity, past patterns and trends have not yet been fully dealt with. Dynamics of fragility seem in fact to continue today in five domains, namely, security, economy, environment, governance, and social issues. This study has also shown that, in this overall context of fragility, the country's education system has itself inevitably become fragile and has faced great challenges in rebuilding the system and overcoming its fragility. Looking in particular at four of the issues – access and equality; educational opportunities for the youth; quality and relevance; and governance, management, and financing – this study concludes that not only has the potential of education to mitigate and counter political, economic, and social aspects of fragility not been adequately exploited, but that its largely continuing state of fragility runs the risk of perpetuating patterns and dynamics of fragility both at the sectoral and the macro level.

Based on the main findings of the study, a number of recommendations may be suggested.

1. *Recognize that, while the war has ended, the peace is still fragile as the root causes and legacies of past fragility and conflict remain and continue to play out in the present*
    While the CPA brought an end to the fighting, it did not guarantee steady and prolonged peace as it did not adequately address the underlying causes of the conflict. These include widespread poverty and unemployment, uneven distribution of wealth and opportunities, land disputes, weak and exclusionary institutions of governance, and social disparities and divisions. Analyses of reports and field interviews suggest that peace has been maintained with numerous visible signs of stability today: improved physical security; resumption of economic activity; high political will manifest in the government's official inclusionary language and practice and in reforms carried out in various domains, as well as increased transparency and accountability. However, a number of continuing threats to stability still prevail, many of which are related to largely unresolved causes and legacies of past fragility and conflict, and these raise concerns about the possibility of a return to tension and violence. In order for peace to be consolidated, such issues urgently need to be addressed.

2. *Recognize that weaknesses in the education system compound fragilities in other domains, and advocate for the role of education in building long-term sustainable peace*
    Poor access and low quality education have the potential to exacerbate existing fragilities, including: socio-economic disparities; poor economic prospects of many young people and their lack of integration into useful adult roles; a weak human capital base for economic and political development; and low public trust in the government's capacity and will to provide basic services. At the same time, poor access and quality are likely to weaken the potentially positive effects that greater access and higher quality would have in mitigating and addressing fragility, as well as in building resilience. Education has the potential to play a positive role in a variety of ways. It can be an instrument to address historic inequalities and to improve general economic well-being. It can be a means to help children discern truth from falsehood and to provide disengaged youth with occupation and purpose by providing them with employment prospects. It can provide the opportunity to teach,

practice and demonstrate good governance and transparency, as opposed to corruption and clientelism, and to foster an attitude of collective ownership and stewardship of the country's natural resources. It can also provide an opportunity for (re)building public trust in the government, as well as for improving general governance through better government performance, heightened accountability and increased civic participation and dialogue at central, local, and community levels.

Recognizing the potential role of education in actively mitigating fragility and conflict as well as the consequences of not providing education, is a first important step towards actual action. While such recognition is growing, these issues must be better publicized, especially outside education circles where schooling is generally discussed as a cost rather than an investment in social well-being.

3. *Take steps to both reconstruct and reform the education system, while recognizing that reorienting the system towards more inclusive purposes is a long-term effort*
    In the aftermath of the war, the primary focus of reconstruction efforts has been to get the school system up and running, and back to where it was before the conflict – though with greater access – as quickly as possible, rather than to reinvent the system. In doing so, however, it appears that basic questions about the nature of the system to be reconstructed, and the relevance of schooling to the current Liberian context, have not received adequate attention. While reconstruction provides an opportunity for a fundamental reassessment of the previous system, Liberian schooling seems to be continuing the historical trend of following and supporting the existent social and economic order rather than challenging and transforming it. Considering that it is taking up to a decade just to get back to the school system as it stood prior to the outbreak of fighting, long-term commitment and effort are needed to reform and improve the pre-war education system.

4. *Take steps to increase access to quality and relevant education, and to address and explicitly track disparities*
    The roots of conflict and fragility in Liberia have been widely perceived to be linked to the exclusionary practices and institutions developed with the founding of the state. Consistent with such practices, education has historically played an exclusionary role in Liberia, thereby fuelling conflict. For most of Liberian history, schools have primarily served the elite, while lower levels of access and quality were belatedly offered to the general population. In recognition of the fact that such inequality had been an important cause of the war, the government made an early decision to promote widespread and inclusive educational provision, and to address disparities by prioritizing access for underrepresented and marginalized groups. It also took steps to generally improve the quality and the economic, social and civic relevance of education by addressing issues related to curriculum and textbooks, and teacher training.

    The nascent stage of government institutions, characterized by limited capacity and resources, has, however, complicated the task of expanding and improving service delivery. As a result, access to quality education continues to be limited and largely determined by location, income, and gender. With persistent low levels and inequalities in access and quality being potential threats to security, as well as to the economic and social development of the nation, more effective and explicit action should be urgently taken to address existing flaws and explicitly track disparities. As goodwill on the part of the government is a crucial

but insufficient condition for success, sustained investment and policy focus, as well as monitoring and follow-up, should be prioritized for this purpose.

5. *Take steps to address the educational needs of the generation that missed out on education, with a focus on the often neglected youth*
In Liberia, education must not only address the needs of children coming into the school system through conventional development of primary, secondary, and tertiary systems, the livelihood needs of youth who have missed out on education also need to be addressed. A clear finding of this research revealed that in a context where primary education has received the bulk of attention and resources, compared to post-primary education, the livelihood needs of the youth have particularly been neglected and have not been adequately met by existing programmes such as ALP programmes and the TVET system. Given that disengaged youth are considered among the most likely spoilers of peace, steps should be urgently taken to efficaciously engage this group and to prevent any further destabilizing force by providing them with both basic education and skills training. Among other things, steps should be taken to clarify the purpose and function of ALP, including its relationship to primary education on the one hand, and to livelihood training, the TVET system, and other youth programmes on the other. Efforts should also be made to work more effectively across sectors and across ministries, as well as with business and civil society organizations outside the government. Overall, youth employment and vocational/technical training programmes should be carefully designed with an understanding of the perspectives and aspirations of those they serve and the reality in which they live. Ill-designed, such initiatives may do little to help, and may in fact exacerbate existing problems.

6. *Take steps to improve governance in education by re-energizing decentralization efforts and by better involving local communities*
A number of initiatives aimed at promoting local participation have been taken in Liberia. At the national level, for instance, the highly consultative PRS process was seen as successful in mobilizing public understanding and buy-in. Policies have been developed to create community-level mechanisms to work with schools, such as PTAs and SMCs, and to allow decision-making by country and district education officials. While accountability mechanisms will need to be put in place, the capacities of communities and education officials closer to schools remain under-utilized. These should be capitalized upon and re-energized in order to relieve some of the overload at central offices and to promote local ownership. Local resources should be better drawn upon by developing and supporting mechanisms and processes for engaging communities, women, and youth. Given the high levels of personal entrepreneurship and commitment at the community level, a modest infusion of resources in support of community initiatives may lead to considerable local development, as well as contribute to a vigorous legacy of active civil society organizations at community and national levels, zealous in guarding their rights and prerogatives, and the interests of their members.

7. *Recognize the current transitional state of the system and the evolution of balance between provision and support, and identify development assistance modalities that support government as it develops strategic capacity*
Institutions of governance, security, economy, and social order were weak at the onset of conflict and were largely destroyed as a result of it. At this point in time, most of these institutions are in the process of development. While much of the groundwork has been

laid, systems and processes for effective service delivery are not yet in place due to a lack of funding and capacity. As a result, public trust remains guardedly hopeful but tenuous.

Liberia has characteristics of both emergency and development stages. The government simultaneously continues to need some assistance in service delivery as well as support in building its own capacities. Ideally, development assistance would provide just the right balance between the two, and shift to more supportive modalities of assistance in line with increases in government capacity, and consistent with the goals of alignment and harmonization. Unfortunately, the mechanisms of provision have not shifted as quickly as needed with most of the development assistance still being project-based and off-budget, and not under government control. This limits the effectiveness of international support in helping government achieve its objectives and building its capacity. Consequently, there is still a need for a two-track approach that combines assistance in service delivery with long-range state-building efforts and a planned transition from direct provision to support of government provision, as well as greater government ownership and management of its development agenda. Ideally, these plans would be coordinated with the larger capacity development strategies being developed by the government beyond the education sector.

8. *Maintain technical and financial support until institutions are able to function on their own*
To the extent that the permanence of peace depends on the effective functioning of local institutions in terms of security, governance, economy, and social life, external support may be needed over an extended period of time. Institutions take longer to stabilize and build in a fragile environment than otherwise. From this perspective, institution-building, crucial for delivering services and building popular trust, is the critical task of external support in a fragile environment.

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Annex 1. Target and actual interviews and focus group, by inside/outside Monrovia

Interview type	Target interviews (inside /outside Monrovia)	Actual interviews (inside /outside Monrovia)
1. Key respondent: Liberian government officials (non-education)	4/2	4/5
2. Key respondent: Liberian goverment (education)	4/2	2/3
3. Key respondent: citizens/civil society	5/5	10/6
4. Key respondent: NGO/Donors/international agencies (non-education & education)	10/0	22/2
5. Key respondent: teachers, principals, counsellors (school level staff)	3/6	1/8
6. Key respondent: students	3/3	3/1
7. Focus group: citizens/civil society	2/2	2/2
8. Focus group: NGO/donors/international agencies	2/0	2/0
9. Focus group: teachers, principals, counsellors (school level staff)	1/4	0/6
10. Focus group: students	1/1	0/1
Total	35/25	46/34

Box 1. Examples from the 1996 curriculum

Nursery school social studies

The national curriculum guide for nursery school social studies lists, for example, the following objectives and content.

After having studied this unit, the pupil will be able to:

1. name [sic] the countries;
2. name [sic] the capital;
3. state the colours of the flag;
4. explain that Liberia is only one country, and there are other countries in the world: and
5. discuss why Liberia is well known.

Under the last point, the content specifies, 'Our country is well known for several reasons. It is the oldest Black African Republic. It was founded as a home for freed slaves. It has been a leader of African nations. It has been at war.

Under the topic of 'civic education', the curriculum specifies, among others, the following content:

1. Citizens of a country have love for their country. Citizens of Liberia must love Liberia and, after God, must put Liberia first and last.
2. Citizens of Liberia must also have love for each other.
3. People from a country are one because they all belong to one country.

The curriculum specifies the following activities, among others:

1. Discuss things Liberians can do to show that they love one another such as helping, sharing, and so on.
2. Discuss Unification Day as a day when Liberians from all walks of life celebrate being one, and coming together as one people.
3. Compare Liberia to a parent, and the citizens or Liberians as being children of Liberia.

Grade 12 social studies

The senior high school social studies curriculum goes much deeper. Unit XII, Grade 12, discusses the 1990s as follows:

UNIT XII Topic: the period of the 1990s

Specific objectives:

At the end of this unit, the student should be able to:

1. assess Liberia's civil war and develop positive feelings toward its resolution;
2. appreciate regional initiatives in peaceful resolution of the Liberian conflict;
3. review and analyse all of the peace accords and state the strengths and weaknesses of these accords.

Content

- The civil conflict and its resolution
- The Freetown Conference
- The Banjul Conference and the establishment of an Interim Government for National Unity
- The Bamako Conference
- The Geneva Conference
- The Benin Conference
- The Yamasokro I-IV Conferences
- The Akosombo Conference
- The Abuja Conference

Activities

1. Let the student discuss and assess the Liberian civil conflict and state the advantages and disadvantages.
2. Let the student demonstrate an appreciation of regional peaceful initiative in conflict resolution.
3. Let the student review and analyse all of the peace accords and state their strengths and weaknesses.
4. Let the student suggest alternatives to the peaceful resolution of conflict among people.
5. Let the student define the concept of patriotism and list ways by which it can be applied in the Liberian society.

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The study

Liberia has experienced a long history of political, social and economic fragility, and insecurity, the legacies of which have inevitably shaped the present. Culminating in the instability of the 1980s and the civil war, which started in 1989, overt conflict finally ended with the signing of the 2003 Accra Peace Accord, allowing the country to embark on intensive efforts of post-war reconstruction and development, as well as peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Historically, while schooling served an educational function for many, it also played a major role in the historic patterns of exclusion and marginalization by limiting access, offering low levels of quality for many, and hewing to the culture of one out of many groups in society. While the Liberian government aims to rebuild the system, the achievement of its objectives has been hindered by the immensity of the task.

This report, published by UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP), examines the impact of education on fragility in Liberia through a review of the interaction of education with the drivers and dynamics of fragility.